

for publication. The Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten was kind enough to continue a thirty years old tradition of cooperation in the organization of the Leiden Rencontres, also by taking care of its financial administration and by accepting this volume for publication in its series.

K. R. VEENHOF

Abbreviations follow the conventions current among Assyriologists for citing the main text editions and for the rest are those listed in *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie*, vol. 6 (Berlin, 1983), iii-xxvii. Additional ones are explained per article, usually in the first footnote.

CUNEIFORM ARCHIVES*

An Introduction

KLAAS R. VEENHOF (Leiden)

Shortly before the end of the fourth millennium B.C., as a result of developments which have been convincingly reconstructed in recent years¹, the clay tablet emerged as the standard vehicle of writing in ancient Mesopotamia. This novel use of clay had important consequences for the historical documentation, since it introduced the most durable writing material of antiquity, except for stone and certain metals which were only used on a small scale for specific, largely ceremonial and prestigious purposes. Clay tablets had a fair chance of surviving the ravages of time when they were baked—which was only done in particular situations²—or sun-dried. Of course, they could be broken or crushed (to use the ancient terminology for canceling legal documents³), they were vulnerable to (ground) water and could disintegrate because of the crystallization of the salt contained in their clays (still a concern of keepers of present day tablet collections). But frequently they survived, damaged or not, the destruction of buildings in which they were kept, in particular conflagration, the constant threat to perishable writing materials such as papyrus or parchment. Fire could even improve their durability, and probably more tablets in antiquity were baked and preserved by random fires than by deliberate baking in tablet ovens. Even tablets which no longer served administrative purposes and were discarded as superfluous, regularly survived, sometimes even

* Revised and updated English version of the author's Dutch inaugural address delivered in Leiden, published as *Spijkerschriftarchieven* (Leiden, Brill, 1984) and also printed in *Phœnix* 28 (1982), 8-36. I have tried to take account of the papers published in this volume and incorporated references to them, mainly in the footnotes.

¹ D. Schmandt-Besserat, 'An Archaic Recording System and the Origin of Writing', in: *Syro-Mesopotamian Studies* 1/2 (1977), in particular 22ff. on the hollow clay *bullae* containing "tokens" and with impressions of them on their outer surface, convincingly interpreted as three-dimensional precursors of the flat clay tablet. Cf. eadem, *Visible Language* 15/4 (1981), 321-344.

² The question which tablets were deliberately baked in antiquity (and not accidentally fired by conflagration) deserves a special investigation which has to start from the tablets themselves, since written references to baking are extremely rare. Cf. *CAD* S 113b, *šarpu*, b, 3'; H. Hunger, *Babylonische und assyrische Kolophone* (AOAT 2; Neukirchen, 1968), 7, and the remarks by J. Reade in this volume on the baking of library texts. H. Hunger (*BagM* 5 [1970], 197) notes that all baked tablets in a private NB archive from Uruk are title-deeds recording purchases.

³ *zir* (Sumerian), *ḫepûm*, *marâqum* (Neo-Assyrian).

in large groups. Many are discovered in secondary use as fill of walls and benches or for levelling floors, an understandable custom in an alluvial plain devoid of stone as cheap building material. The thousands of "Persepolis fortification tablets" (in Elamite and Aramaic) provide an impressive example (perpetuated in their name)⁴, and the custom was widespread, though not always recorded in excavation reports^{4a}.

Accordingly, the historian of ancient Mesopotamia is in a favorable position compared to scholars studying countries and civilizations which used papyrus, leather, parchment or paper for daily recording. Even when rich epigraphical remains are available, like from ancient Egypt, one is faced with the effects of a "natural" selection, since as a rule only ceremonial inscriptions on stone etc. and texts deposited in places where destruction and climatic influences had little effect (such as tombs in the desert) have survived, while the bulk of what was written for administrative purposes has perished. The contrast is obvious in places where both clay tablets and papyri were written and kept, such as El Amarna, where only the official correspondence on clay was discovered. One of the archival rooms (no. 61) of Sennacherib's "palace without rival" still contained many sealed bullae, but the papyri to which they originally had been affixed, originating from Syria, Palestine and Egypt, had disintegrated⁵. Thanks to Parpola we now know that in the first millennium B.C. Babylonian and Assyrian scribes regularly wrote on "codices", multiple wax-covered wooden writing boards, in particular literary and scientific texts. But the hundreds of "codices" mentioned in the "library records" from the time of Ashurbanipal are not represented among the materials of the Kuyunjik collection; we only have one earlier specimen, made of ivory and preserved in a well at Nimrud. The rest must have been destroyed by fire together with the Assyrian palaces⁶.

In the "treasury" at Persepolis ca. ninety tablets were found, still with the traces of charred strings which passed through them. But the (probably Aramaic) "letter orders" on papyrus, to which these clay labels with Elamite summaries of their contents had been attached, of course had not survived the conflagration of the building⁷. Judging from the many sealed "clay rings" found, the municipal

⁴ R. T. Hallock, 'The Persepolis Fortification Archive', *OrNS* 47 (1973), 320-23.

^{4a} The Ur III tablets found during excavations at Ur in 1924/25 are not the archives of a "Registrar's Office" situated in the É-dub-lá-mah, "fallen from the shelves where they had been stored" (*Antiquaries Journal* 5 [1925], 392), but had been used as filling material, five and six layers deep, underneath the Cassite pavement of baked bricks. See Th. Jacobsen, *AJA* 57 (1953), 125f.

⁵ A. H. Layard, *Discoveries in Nineveh and Babylon* (London, 1853), 153f. 460f., on room no. 61, with a wall provided with niches where the papyri most probably were kept. G. Goossens, *RA* 46 (1952), 104 note 1, uses the term "chancellerie araméenne". See also below for J. Reade's observations on these archives.

⁶ S. Parpola, 'Assyrian Library Records', *JNES* 42 (1983), 1-30.

⁷ G. G. Cameron, *Persepolis Treasury Tablets* (*OIP* 64; Chicago, 1949), together with his observations in *JNES* 17 (1958), 161-176, and 24 (1965), 166-192.

registration office (*chreofulakion*) of Seleucid Uruk kept in its archives numerous contracts on papyrus, dealing with the sale of fields and slaves. But original deeds are only known in the form of clay tablets dated to the years before 275 B.C. Around that time Antiochus I introduced a fiscal measure (possibly in order to finance his military campaigns) which taxed such transactions and this apparently entailed the obligation of registering them officially, obviously in Greek and no longer in Babylonian. As a consequence, clay tablets disappeared and the "clay rings", once fitted around the Greek papyri, are the only trace of the archives consisting of perishable writing material⁸.

The survival of thousands of clay tablets provides the Assyriologist with a wealth and great variety of historical sources which have escaped selection but for the hazards of archaeological discovery and the preference of certain excavators for particular types of ruins⁹. They offer possibilities of detailed historical reconstruction, in particular when large, coherent groups of documents are (officially) excavated, carefully registered (according to find-spots) and published as a whole together with their archaeological record. Such groups are not rare, even though the conditions mentioned frequently are not fully met: some consist of libraries, many of archives.

Libraries captured the attention right from the beginning, thanks to the early discovery of Ashurbanipal's royal collection and to the fact that early Assyriology was strongly influenced by the literary-historical interests which pervaded classical scholarship and biblical studies. At first, attention was frequently focused on (at times single) texts as "historical documents" in a narrow sense, or as sources of legal or religious history. It was mainly after the beginning of the twentieth century that gradually a change was brought about by the discovery of thousands of administrative records in the various centres of the realm of the Third Dynasty of Ur (21st century B.C.)¹⁰. Faced with vast quantities of tablets which at times were depreciated as "dull records" or "laundry lists", Assyriologists could take example by the rapidly developing Papyrology. There, the value and possibilities of this type of records had soon been realized, and the importance of an "archival approach"

⁸ M. I. Rostovtzeff, 'Seleucid Babylonia: Bullae and Seals of Clay with Greek Inscriptions', *Yale Classical Studies* 3 (1932), 3-114; L. T. Doty, *Cuneiform Archives from Hellenistic Uruk* (Diss. Yale, 1977; *UM* 77-27.070), Ch. IV, 'Royal Taxation and Record Keeping in Seleucid Uruk'. See also E. Posner, *Archives in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), 32 ff.

⁹ Official excavations frequently concentrate on palaces and temples (Nineve, Mari, Tell Rimah, Ebla, etc.), so that our knowledge of private archives is restricted. Many of the latter, in particular from the OB and OA periods, originate from uncontrolled digging and have been broken up and dispersed by dealers.

¹⁰ In particular the discoveries at Girsu (Telloh), Umma and Puzrish-Dagan (Drehem). See for an interpretational analysis of their impact and potential, T. B. Jones, 'Sumerian Administrative Documents: An Essay', in: *Sumerological Studies in Honor of Thorkild Jacobsen* (*AS* 20; Chicago, 1975), 41-62.

which attaches great value to their provenance (e.g. from one single mummy wrapping) had been acknowledged. In the wake of a number of diligent collectors, some industrious compilers and a few brilliant pioneers, interest in this kind of material grew rapidly, in particular after the second World War, favoured by an increasing popularity of social and economic history. This development was stimulated by the improved knowledge of Sumerian—the language of most administrative records from the third millennium B.C.—and the discovery of important Akkadian archives in Mari, Kanish, Nuzi, Ugarit e.a. Its effects can be observed in recent bibliographies of cuneiform studies, where titles using the words “archives” and “archival” have become rather numerous.

For many readers, the word “archives” may well evoke the spectacular pictures of room L. 2769 of the Early Bronze Age palace G in Ebla, filled with thousands of clay tablets¹¹. This discovery, which sheds welcome new light on the material aspects of archives, also raises the question what archives in fact are. The first publications speak of “library” as well as “archives”¹², which might annoy students of archival history. This somewhat inconsiderate use of terminology—not an isolated feature in Assyriology, compare the use of “myth” and “epic”—might suggest that both terms are interchangeable or at least that the combination of archival records and literary documents (scientific and school texts) was standard. It is true that texts of both types may originate from the same spot. A royal chancery not only dealt with administrative records, but presumably also with (the production of) certain royal inscriptions, perhaps including “laws” and hymns¹³. A temple frequently possessed texts of a liturgical or scientific nature alongside records reflecting its economic activities. Scholars often kept their private archives and professional libraries together, as the house of the famous “incantation priest” in Assur and that of Rap’anu in Ugarit show¹⁴.

The combination at Ebla, however, is of a different nature. Room L. 2769 contained administrative records and what Assyriologists call “school texts”, i.e.

¹¹ See the illustrations accompanying P. Matthiae’s contribution to this volume.

¹² Cf. e.g. G. Pettinato, *Testi Amministrativi della Biblioteca L. 2769* (MEE 2; Napoli, 1980), alongside *The Archives of Ebla* (Garden City, 1981) by the same author. The designation “archives” now seems to be generally accepted, see e.g. the title of the series *Archivi reali di Ebla* (Roma, 1981 ff.). The designation “biblioteca” in the first title seems to refer to the room where most texts were discovered (L. 2769) rather than to its contents.

¹³ See for the OB royal chancery (presumably the é.dub.ba of the residence) the remarks by F. R. Kraus, *Vom mesopotamischen Menschen der altbabylonischen Zeit und seiner Welt* (Kon. Ned. Akad. v. Wet., Afd. Lett. N.R. 36/6 (Amsterdam, 1973), 23 f. See for royal “scriptoria” in the NA period, not necessarily identical to the chancery, the remarks by Reade elsewhere in this volume.

¹⁴ Documents from Rap’anu’s house were published in *Ugaritica* 5 (1969), 41-259; cf. the survey in *Dictionnaire de la Bible, Suppl.*, fasc. 52-53 (Paris, 1979), cols. 1253-1261. See for the libraries and archives excavated in Assur O. Pedersén, *Archives and Libraries in the City of Assur. A Survey of the Material from the German Excavations*, part I (*Studia Semitica Upsaliensia* 16; Uppsala, 1985) (forthcoming).

lists of signs and words and practice texts, including some literary pieces. Such combinations are not unknown from Mesopotamia proper, as is shown by discoveries e.g. in the “Tablet House” in Shuruppak¹⁵ and in the mansion of the Old Babylonian priest Ur-Utu in Tell ed-Dēr, recently excavated by a Belgian expedition¹⁶. The combination is more likely in older periods and in small institutions without separate rooms for different activities, where the background of the individual scribe may have left its mark. It is quite natural for private houses, in particular during the Old Babylonian period, whose owner ran a school and kept his personal archives there as well, as was the case in “Quiet Street no. 7” in Ur¹⁷. But this does not mean that administrative records and school texts or libraries were normally kept together, or that scribal training and scribal practice were always combined. Large institutions frequently had special rooms for keeping and filing administrative records, such as the “archival rooms” in Eanna in Uruk during the Neo-Babylonian and early Achaemenid times¹⁸. Some of them (also?) served as repositories for archives in a narrow sense, i.e. records no longer in daily use and kept in separate storage. A good example is the so-called “archival building” in Girsu¹⁹, and in this volume van Soldt suggests the existence of a depository of older records of the ‘central archives’ on the second floor of the palace of Ugarit.

In general schools were private institutions during the Old Babylonian period, run in the houses of expert scribes and not located in temple or palace²⁰. But of course, having completed their education and having entered such institutions, some scribes may have taken along handbooks and even some literary tablets which they had copied as students. However, such texts are more likely to be found where the professional activities of a scribe were not primarily of an administrative nature, but required the use of literary or scientific texts, which he might then keep in his room, as was the case with Anu-belshunu, a scholar attached to the Bit-Resh in Uruk during the Seleucid period, the remainder of whose archives and professional library were found together²¹.

¹⁵ See H. P. Martin, ‘The Tablets of Shuruppak’, in: *Le temple et le culte* (CRRAI 20; Istanbul, 1975), 18 ff.; D. O. Edzard, ‘Die Archive von Šuruppak (Fāra) ...’ in: E. Lipiński (ed.), *State and Temple Economy in the Ancient Near East*, 1 (OLA 5; Leuven, 1979), 153 ff. Also F. Pomponio, ‘“Archives” and the Prosopography of Fara’, *AJSL* 5 (1983), 127-145.

¹⁶ L. de Meyer, *Archeologia* 195 (Oct. 1984), 21 ff.

¹⁷ L. Woolley-M. Mallowan, *Ur Excavations VII. The Old Babylonian Period* (London, 1976), 110-112.

¹⁸ See *UVB* 12/13 (1956), 13 and 18.

¹⁹ See the description by L. Heuzey, in: É. de Sarzec, *Découvertes en Chaldée* I (Paris, 1884-1912), 435 ff., ‘Fouilles au tell des tablettes’, summarized by F. Milkau in: *Geschichte der Bibliotheken* (*Handbuch der Bibliothekswissenschaft*, III/1, 1955), 25 ff.

²⁰ See A. W. Sjöberg in *AS* 20 (Chicago, 1975), 176 ff. The ‘palace school’ of Mari (rooms 24-25) is now convincingly interpreted as a storage room, see J. Margueron, *Recherches sur les palais mésopotamiens de l’Age du Bronze* I (BAH 107; Paris, 1982), 345 ff.

²¹ *UVB* 18 (Berlin, 1962), 43, II (W 20.030). Most texts of this group are now published in J. v. Dijk-W. R. Mayer, *Texte aus dem Rēš-Heiligtum in Uruk-Warka* (*BagM Beiheft* 2; Berlin, 1980), where nos. 1-108 are literary and scientific texts and nos. 113-141 letters and records.

In Ebla, the obviously small number of professional scribes employed by the palace chancery apparently also acted as teachers. The impressive "school texts" of room L. 2769 must have been their own handbooks²², compiled during or after their education or acquired from others, and used for training apprentice scribes, as the many excerpts show. It is not surprising that they kept all their tablets, including "school texts", in the only room well equipped for such purposes. The situation was in this respect similar in other places where Babylonian cuneiform was taught and used outside Mesopotamia, in particular during the second millennium B.C., as the discovery of records and "school texts" in such places as El-Amarna²³, Afek, Ugarit, Alalakh, Boghazköy and Susa shows.

The presence of archival records in some collections of mainly literary and scientific texts can also be explained from the interest, no doubt fostered by the schools, in documents of the past, in particular in royal inscriptions, which were copied and included in various collections. A number of letters of kings of the Third Dynasty of Ur and some of their successors were studied and copied in the Old Babylonian schools and became part of the standard curriculum of that period²⁴. In this connection the apparent mixture of library and archival texts in what is traditionally called "Ashurbanipal's library" should also be mentioned. The conviction that this mixture is secondary, due to destruction or the collapse of rooms on a second floor, is now weakened by Parpola's thesis, offered in this volume, that important groups of archival texts of the recent past were incorporated in some royal libraries out of historical interest. At the same time this warns us against lumping all "libraries" together and not distinguishing between a private scholar's collection of professional handbooks and "classics" and a royal, palatial collection, including documents bearing on the history of the realm and the politics and exploits of previous kings as documented in records of the chancery.

Room L. 2769 in Ebla was a typical archival room, designed for systematically filing texts, not for writing or consulting them on the spot. This may have been done in the connecting room L. 2875, perhaps a *scriptorium* or scribal office, provided with low benches along the walls. This is a provision well known from Mesopotamia proper as one of the typical features of "tablet rooms". It seems to have served various purposes, storing tablets, as we know from the "archival building" in Girsu, laying out records for consultation or filing, and seating scribes reading or writing tablets. Scribal activities in general are hard to prove since they

²² We know that Eblaite scribes working for the palace also composed or copied 'school texts'; Tira'il, e.g., the writer of the 'Hamazi Letter', is also known from some colophons of lexical texts, cf. Pettinato *MEE* 3, p. XIX, A, C.

²³ See the remarks by P. Artzi elsewhere in this volume on the "library" (actually "school texts") discovered at El-Amarna together with the diplomatic correspondence.

²⁴ See P. Michalowski, *The Royal Correspondence of Ur* (UM 76.302.369), and for the interest in inscriptions of earlier (Oakk, Guti, Ur III) kings, F. R. Kraus, 'Altbabylonische Quellensammlungen zur altesopotamischen Geschichte', *AfO* 20 (1963), 153-155.

rarely left clear archaeological traces, unless we are dealing with school rooms, where the typical lentil shaped "school texts" and other exercise tablets are proof of scribal activity.

Only in rare cases do the remains of tablet clay, unfinished tablets and writing instruments reveal the function of such "scribal offices". A good example is provided by the discoveries (in room 8 and court 4) of the above-mentioned residence of Ur-Utu in Tell ed-Dēr²⁵. The presence of a well or water jar in itself is not sufficient proof²⁶. Since many "scribal offices" were located in rooms adjoining courts, we can also imagine the scribes working in the open air, profiting from the available light, in particular if there was some protection against the sun, as was afforded by the portico surrounding the palace court of Ebla. Clear traces of scribal activity were discovered in court V of the palace of Ugarit, which contained a tablet oven still filled with some seventy tablets, inscribed in alphabetic cuneiform. The oven must have been used by the scribes of the so-called south-western archives located in room 81 nearby. Apparently one of their tasks was translating documents arriving from abroad — such as the letter of a Hittite king, found in the oven — and baking them for the chancery archives²⁷.

Most examples of "archives" adduced thusfar show that we do not use that term in its accepted meaning of a collection or repository of records no longer in use but preserved for their historical value and stored separately. We have mentioned a few occasions where such measures had been taken, but they probably were rare, not only in ancient Mesopotamia. Normally, old records no longer needed by the administration were thrown away in due time or put to secondary use, as building material, mummy wrapping, etc. The occasional presence of older documents without any apparent practical use may simply be due to the failure to take such measures on the part of the responsible scribes, e.g. when there was no lack of space to store them.

We use "archives" as a designation of what archival science calls a "fonds d'archives", that is "the total of records accumulated during the time a particular task was performed by an institution or person", to which some would like to add "and still present with those who made them out or used them"²⁸. These conditions are met by many cuneiform archives, which were normally used and kept growing until the very moment they stopped, usually in consequence of some catastrophe.

²⁵ See note 16.

²⁶ Mallowan observed that rooms NT 12 of the Nabû Temple at Kalhu "contained a square recess in which there was a deep well of small diameter intended for use of the scribes who prepared the tablet clay" (*Nimrud and its Remains*, I, [London, 1966], 271). This interpretation was only possible because other features identified NT 12 as a 'tablet room'.

²⁷ See *Ugaritica* 4 (1962), 51 ff. and *Dictionnaire de la Bible, Suppl.*, fasc. 52-53 (Paris, 1979), col. 1231-34.

²⁸ See for the question of the definition of "archive(s)", Posner *op. cit.* (note 8), 4 ff. and J. L. van der Gouw, *Archiefwetenschap* (The Hague, 1973), 3 f.

The time of abandonment or destruction normally can be determined from the dates of the latest records. The location of many "tablet rooms", moreover, indicates that their "archives" were used and served practical purposes. We find them near the entrance of a palace for registering what is entering or leaving, near a court or audience room for consultation, near or in a workshop, kitchen or storehouse for checking the movements of goods, the consumption and the production, and for taking stock²⁹.

In most cases, such archives were abandoned and left on the spot when the buildings which housed them were destroyed, as the examples of Ebla, *kārum* Kanish, Nuzi, etc. show. At times their owners must have tried to save a number of valuable records, as could be observed in Ur-Utu's house in Tell ed-Dēr, where a (partially?) unsuccessful attempt was made to save a number of precious title-deeds stored in room 8 or 12. When a palace was captured without destruction, some archives might be maintained and even continued by the new ruler in view of administrative continuity for which he needed earlier records and well-informed civil servants. This may have happened e.g. after Hammurabi's capture of Larsa or after the Persian conquest of Babylon, where the administrative records do not point to immediate radical changes. In the palace administration of Mari there are a few officials who survived a change of régime at the beginning of the Assyrian domination and after Zimrilim had conquered the throne. Zimrilim's chancery archives preserved hundreds of letters belonging to the correspondance of his Assyrian predecessors, but administrative records of that period apparently were removed. Part of these, clearly portions of much larger archives, were used for secondary purposes, as has become clear recently, when they were rediscovered i.a. as fill of mudbrick benches. There is no reason to deny these groups of administrative records from the period of Assyrian rule the qualification "archives", even though they were not found *in situ*. But we must be aware of considerable gaps due to selection (chronologically and typologically; the small daily records were preferred as filling material over the larger ledger tablets) and random discovery, which makes their use for statistical purposes risky³⁰. Zimrilim's own chancery archives, including the earlier material they contained, were sorted out by scribes of Hammurabi after he had captured the city. According to the text of two famous clay labels discovered in room 115—where they may have assembled the chancery material they were interested in—they distinguished between "tablets of Zimrilim's

²⁹ Ugarit provides good examples with the "western archives" (rooms 2-5) and the "eastern archives" (rooms 54-56) located near the two entrances to the palace. The "archival rooms" of Ebla (L. 2769-2875) were strategically located both in relation to the court of audience and the administrative quarter. The 'kitchen archive' of Mari was housed in room 5, close to the kitchen itself.

³⁰ See in particular the observations by D. Charpin in *MARI* 3 (1984), 107f. and his analysis of 'Les archives du devin Asqudum', to be published in *MARI* 4 (colloque CNRS 620).

servants" and "tablets of Shamshi-Adad's servants"³¹. We do not know which practical purposes the operation served, since Mari's final destruction and abandonment followed soon. Hammurabi's scribes may have collected information and taken along a number of important documents but, fortunately, they left the bulk of the palace archives on the spot.

A generally accepted Dutch definition of archives requires that they stem from administrative bodies or their officials, and that the records were made out, used, and preserved *ex officio*³². Many archives of ancient Mesopotamia and neighbouring areas where cuneiform was used meet this condition, in particular those of temples, palaces and governmental institutions. Their official character is clearly borne out by their location, contents, and by the titles and seals of the administrators involved, often qualified as servants of a king, a temple or a god. Such archives are extremely important for realizing one of the main goals of archival studies, that of reconstructing the administration of the past on the basis of complete collections of records of the same provenance. In practice, however, Assyriology uses a wider definition which includes private archives, an extension for which practical arguments can be adduced. We have a number of very large private archives from various periods which comprise hundreds of records, the analysis of which requires a systematic archival approach. Only in this way it will be possible to get insight into questions such as the origin, spread and range of records, the reasons for the presence or absence of particular (groups of) documents, the nature of the administration and bookkeeping procedures, the functions and competence of the persons involved. The difference between official and private archives, moreover, is at times less significant than the terminology might suggest. This is true when private archives belong to a person who heads a large, rich family which operates as a kind of institution, with a hierarchical structure, an efficient administration and a variety of personnel. We know archives of family firms of the Old Assyrian period, specialised in overland trade, with foreign branches and agents abroad, operating with capital invested by others³³. Neo-Babylonian sources

³¹ F. Thureau-Dangin, 'Sur les étiquettes de paniers à tablettes provenant de Mari', in: *Symbolae Koschaker* (SD 2; Leiden, 1939), 119ff. According to the new functional analysis of the palace of Mari by Margueron (elsewhere in this volume), room 115 did not serve as archival room for the royal chancery, but was probably used by Hammurabi's servants for assembling and sorting out documents from various places in the palace.

³² Cf. Van der Gouw, *op. cit.* (noot 28), 3.

³³ See for example the archives of Imdilum recently studied by M. Ichisar, *Les archives cappadociennes du marchand Imdilum* (ADPF; Paris, 1981) and by M.T. Larsen in: *Societies and Languages of the Ancient Near East. Studies in Honour of I. M. Diakonoff* (Warminster, 1982), 214ff., and those of Innaja, studied by N.D.C. Harper, *The Archive of Innaja: A study in the Internal Chronology of the Cappadocian Texts* (Diss. 1982; UM 82-21281). Large archives (originally) comprising between 500 and 1000 documents are furthermore those of Pūšukēn, Adadšulūli and Alāḫum, the latter two still unpublished, excavated in *kārum* Kanish, level II; squares FG 9/10 and NOP 20.

acquaint us with some important family firms devoted to a variety of capitalistic activities, involving banking, trade and agricultural production, which yielded important archives covering several generations³⁴. Some of the large private archives discovered in Nuzi are equally complex, though completely different since their wealthy and powerful owners operated within the socio-economic context of the more "feudal" Late Bronze Age³⁵. All these archives owe their existence to the need of written documentation for evidentiary or informatory purposes, in order to control and steer the movement of goods and persons. The fact that most of these archives comprise some material of a more personal nature (correspondence with relatives, especially women; documents bearing on family affairs, such as marriage, adoption and inheritance) is understandable and no reason for a different classification.

The distinction between official and private archives, moreover, is not always as neat as we might wish. In particular when there is no archaeological information about the findspot of documents and we have to go only by their contents we meet problems of classification. Private archives of some size normally belong to persons of status and substance, which in urban Mesopotamia entails the drawing up and acquisition of records. Such persons usually had personal or business connections with the centres of administration, palace and temple (both also present on the local scene), and not infrequently held offices. This is reflected in their archives, also due to the rather poor separation in antiquity of official and private spheres. The archives of Shamash-hazir, Hammurabi's "administrator of the estate" (dub.sar a.šà.ga) in the south, found and sold by native diggers, are an example. They comprise not only official letters from the king and records bearing on his official duties, but also the correspondence of his wife and documents relating to his own business³⁶. The archives of Ur-Utu, the "chief lamentation priest" of Annunium

³⁴ Notably the archives designated after Egibi and Murashû and the archives of Sinilum; cf. H. Lenz, *Die neubabylonischen harrânu-Geschäftsunternehmen* (Berlin, 1976), 148 ff. with literature. See for Murashû now M. W. Stolper, *Entrepreneurs and Empire* (Istanbul, 1986), and for NB archives in general F. Joannès, *Textes économiques de la Babylonie récente* (ADPF; Paris, 1982). For NB archives excavated at Uruk, see — apart from that mentioned in note 21 — the enumeration in *UVB* 18 (1962), 39 ff.: W. 20.000 (205 texts); W. 20.010 (85 texts, in a jar), and W. 20.032 (32 texts), published by H. Hunger, *BagM* 5 (1970), 193-303. For archives from Babylon, see e.g. L. Jakob-Rost, *Forschungen und Berichte. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin* 10 (1968), 39-62 (no. 38135, from a jar in Merkes).

³⁵ See for Nuzi archives M. P. Maidman, *A Socio-economic Analysis of a Nuzi Family Archive* (UM 77-861) and idem, 'A Nuzi Private Archive. Morphological Considerations', *Assur* 1 (1979), 179-186 (the archives of Tehiptilla of more than 1000 texts). For the archives of Šilwa-Teššup, "prominent aristocrat and entrepreneur", see M. A. Morrison, 'The Family of Šilwa-Tešub mār šarri', *JCS* 31 (1979), 3-29, and G. Wilhelm, *Das Archiv des Šilwa-Teššup*, Heft 2, *Rationenlisten*, I (Wiesbaden, 1980). Important observations on the archive of Tehiptilla in Abdullillah Fadhl, *Studien zur Topographie und Prosopographie der Provinzstädte des Königreichs Arraphe* (BagF 6; Mainz, 1983), see 'Indices', 351.

³⁶ See for him and his archives F. Thureau-Dangin, *RA* 21 (1924), 2 note 2; F. R. Kraus, *Abb* 4, vii; M. Gallery, *A/O* 27 (1980), 15b and 22b. The correspondence of his wife, Zinû, is to be found mainly in *TCL* 18, 108-112; contracts for the cultivation of date-palm gardens in *TCL* 11.

near Sippar, comprise his private title-deeds and correspondence alongside hundreds of debt-notes (in barley and silver), receipts and contracts which reflect his duties as chief (?) administrator of the temple estate and its property³⁷. The Middle Assyrian archives of the family of Ashur-aha-iddina include private records, i.a. the deed of purchase of the house where they were found, and documents which owe their existence to his eldest son's office of governor of the province of Nahur, apparently taken home to Assur at a later time³⁸.

Connections and overlap between official and private archives may also exist when no formal office is involved, but a well administrated contractual relationship. Such was the case e.g. with a category of people acting as managers of personnel, herds and estates of the palace or as sellers of its surpluses (barley, wool, dates, sesame, cattle) during the later OB period. In order to be relieved of direct managerial control over its dependents, the palace seems to have preferred entering a contractual relationship with more or less independent middlemen, charged to collect, deliver or sell what was due to the palace, against a fair commission. The consequence of this state of affairs, discovered by Kraus³⁹, was an expansion of the administration and the necessity of bureaucratic control reflected in the nature and number of records. The persons involved figure in the palace archives, but also in their own documentation, partly because their activities were not limited to what they did for the palace. It is not always easy to decide for whom and in which capacity they are acting and to which archives records have to be assigned, in particular when their findspots are unknown⁴⁰.

Clay tablets could be stored in various ways. Private persons might put them simply in a corner of a room, perhaps wrapped in a piece of textile or a reed mat, or keep them in a jar, basket, bag or box (*pišannum*). Substantial archives required special rooms, not only in administrative institutions, but at times also in private houses. A good example is the room (ca 5.5 by 2.75m) in the house in Nippur where

³⁷ See above note 16. I wish to thank Prof. de Meyer (Gent) for oral information and for the possibility to consult the unpublished dissertations on part of the Ur-Utu archives by Dr. K. van Lerberghe and Dr. M. Tanret. The situation was similar at Ishchali, where the archive of the Kititum temple is at the same time the archive of its *šangûm*, comprising also records of his private activities; see M. de J. Ellis, elsewhere in this volume, in § 4.

³⁸ See for this archive elsewhere in this volume the observations by J. N. Postgate. Most documents from this archive of 83 texts (Assur 14327) were published in *KAJ*.

³⁹ F. R. Kraus, 'Der Palast', *Produzent und Unternehmer im Königreiche Babylon nach Hammurabi* in: E. Lipinski (ed.), *State and Temple Economy in the Ancient Near East II* (*OLA* 6; Leuven, 1979), 423-434, idem, 'Königliche Verfügungen in altbabylonischer Zeit' (*SD* 11; Leiden, 1984), 332 ff. ('Ertragbringer'). Also D. Charpin, 'Marchands du palais et marchands du temple à la fin de la 1^{re} dynastie de Babylone', *JA* 270 (1982), 25-64.

⁴⁰ See the criticism of some ideas put forward by N. Yoffee, *The Economic Role of the Crown in the Old Babylonian Period* (*BiMes* 5; Malibu, 1977), by Kraus, *op. cit.* (1979), 433, and Charpin, *JAOS* 100 (1980), 461 ff., in particular as regards the existence of a "bureau of wool accounts" of the palace and the transactions and records in which Utul-Ishtar figures.

the 730 tablets of the "archives of Murashû" had been stored (BE 9, p. 13). Together with objects of value, such tablets might be kept in a "sealed room" (é.kišib.ba, *bīt kunukkim*, *maknukum*), whose entrance was protected by a sealing, for which we have good evidence from Mari⁴¹. Access by breaking the seal was reserved to authorized persons and checked carefully⁴². Old Assyrian texts tell us that the opening of an absent or dead merchant's "safe" (*maššartum*) in order to inspect his tablets, was surrounded by security measures. It had to be done by a committee, usually of three people (*šalištum*), preferably neutral outsiders (*aḫiūtum*), who had to report on their findings⁴³.

Larger archives required special provisions for storing and filing tablets. Posner distinguishes the open-shelf system, the pigeonhole system, and the container system⁴⁴. The open-shelf system could make use of mudbrick benches or wooden shelving along the walls. Mudbrick benches, common in all periods, were usually ca. 50 cms wide, running along the walls or in the middle of a room. In the "archival building" in Girsu—without doors and to be entered from above, presumably for reasons of security—the excavators discovered on the benches up to six rows of tablets carefully arranged in what seems to have been a chronological order⁴⁵. Such benches have also been found in Ebla and in the archival room (no. 8) of Ur-Utu's mansion at ed-Dēr. A special provision has been observed in Uruk in the Eanna temple (square Qa XIV, 5). It was a room provided with a grooved floor consisting of very low mudbrick walls or ridges running parallel to each other, where the tablets must have been stored. In the "furrows" between them water must have flowed judging from the presence of clay sediment. It has been explained as a device for controlling the humidity in the archives in order to prevent the sun-dried tablets from crumbling in the dry, hot climate⁴⁶.

Such benches may also have served to hold containers (coffers, baskets, bags) with tablets, though frequently rather for temporary purposes such as collecting, sorting and processing the records than for final storage. Baskets and leather bags were regularly used for transporting documents to the administrative centers as

⁴¹ See elsewhere in this volume the contribution by A. Malamat.

⁴² See J. M. Sasson, 'Some Comments on Archive Keeping at Mari', *Iraq* 34 (1972), 55-67, and M. Gallery, *Afo* 27 (1980), 6 ff. on é.kišib.ba.

⁴³ Cf. EL no. 274B and TCL 19, 99:6 ff.: "Read to the *kārum* the letter of the City and take three outsiders and enter the house of my 'father', the old one, and open the storeroom of A. (sealed) with the seals of his representatives; break their sealings—the three persons mentioned should seal it (again, later)—and the triple coffer (with) the tablets of P., our father, open (the coffer with) these tablets and select: one tablet about ..." (etc.). See now also L. Matouš—M. Matoušová-Rajmová, *Kappadokische Keilschrifttafeln mit Siegeln* (Prag, 1984), 80 f., I 580.

⁴⁴ Posner, *op cit.*, 56 ff.

⁴⁵ Implied by the observation of T. B. Jones, *AS* 20(1976), 43 f., that "the clandestine diggers ... seem to have concentrated on the area in which the tablets dated from Shulgi 44 to Amar-Sin were collected".

⁴⁶ *UVB* 12/13 (Berlin, 1956), 18 with pls. 4 and 11. The archives cover the period between Sargon II and Darius II, roughly 200 years. A similar provision was discovered in a room of the house located in Nd XVI 4, cf. *UVB* 18 (1962), 14 and pl. 35.

well, as we know from the texts⁴⁷, which in general are silent on the matters of storage in archival rooms and repositories.

Wooden shelving is known from several excavations, i.a. from Ebla, Ur, Kanish and Boghazköy (room V in building A)^{47a}. In room L. 2769 at Ebla, a triple shelving had been installed, where at least the large rectangular tablets were placed in rows, with their flat sides to the front like cards in a tray. In Nippur (on brick benches) tablets "reclined against each other like a shelf of leaning books"⁴⁸. There are, moreover, some indications for "horizontal filing" of tablets tied up in bundles, and for filing in small baskets or boxes with tablets along the shelves, also outside Mesopotamia, e.g. from the palace of Nestor at Pylos⁴⁹.

Evidence for the pigeonhole system comes mainly from Neo-Assyrian times. The "library room", no. 5, of the Nabû temple in Khorsabad had a wall with three rows of small, square niches (ca. 25-30 cms. square and ca. 40-50 cms deep) for storage of tablets as in a huge honey-comb⁵⁰. A similar provision was in use for the papyrus archives in room 61 of Sennacherib's palace in Nineveh, mentioned above (note 5). The "brick boxes" discovered in the "scribal office" (room no. 4) of the North-Western palace at Kalhu, described as "filing cabinets", may be comparable⁵¹.

Storage in containers was widespread. Excavations have revealed many jars with collections of tablets, and from textual sources we know about the use of baskets and tablet coffers⁵². The existence of the latter can occasionally be deduced from the discovery of neat, square stacks of tablets whose wooden casing has disintegrated⁵³. In the mansion of Ur-Utu at Tell ed-Dēr, according to oral information by Professor de Meyer, some bronze fastenings of such tablet coffers (originally placed on shelves?) have survived. Reed baskets, of course, rarely left traces.

Careful storage in the ways described implies categorization and filing⁵⁴ according to certain criteria in order to keep records available for consultation. Filing

⁴⁷ See for leather bags, *kušdu₁₀.gan* = *tuk(k)annu*, containing tablets, and for "courier's bags" (*kušdu₁₀.gan.ti.bal.a*), qualified as *im.sar.ra.gá.gá.dè* (BIN 9, 284:4f.; 307:1 ff.) and *kišib.ra.a.ba.an.gar šà é.dub.ba* (BIN 9, 413:9 ff.), the references collected by M. Stol, *RIA* 6 (1983), 537b.

^{47a} See K. Bittel, *Hattusha* (New York, 1970), 15 f.

⁴⁸ A. T. Clay, *BE* 14 (1906), 1.

⁴⁹ T. G. Palaima-J. C. Wright, 'Ins and Outs of the Archives Rooms at Pylos. Form and Function of a Mycenaean Palace' *AJA* 89 (1985), 261a with note 33.

⁵⁰ G. Loud-C. B. Altman, *Khorsabad*, II (*OIP* 40; Chicago, 1938), 46 with pl. 19c.

⁵¹ M. E. L. Mallowan, *Nimrud and its Remains*, I (London, 1966), 172.

⁵² See for Mari, in the palace: ARM 10, 12:27 ff.; 82:5 ff.; 13,14:11 ff. Elsewhere in OB: AbB 7, 74:5 (with records about herds); YOS 13, 95:34; 203, rev:1 ff.; AbB 7, 69:9; BE 6/1, 103:41 (in private households). Transport of tablets in a *pišannum*: AbB 3, 84:6; 9, 14:15 ff.; TCL 18, 119:20.

⁵³ E.g. in the "western archives" of the palace of Ugarit, rooms 4 and 5, where the tablets were found "parfois groupées en paquets" (*PRU* 3 [Paris, 1955], xii).

⁵⁴ Neo-Assyrian tablets discovered at Kalhu, with holes where remnants of string were still observable, are proof that at times tablets were literally "filed" by stringing and suspending on a rope records which had to be kept together, see B. Parker, *Iraq* 19 (1957), 125.

could be achieved by distributing them systematically over shelves, jars, coffers and benches according to contents, purpose, origin, date, etc. At times an initial differentiation according to size and shape of the tablet and lay-out of the text was possible, since there was a certain measure of correlation between a tablet's subject matter and its external features, to which also the presence or absence of an envelope or case and seal-impressions (in particular places) belong. Groups of tablets could also be identified by labels, by short inscriptions (on their container or on the tablet itself), and occasionally by other markings. Within a stable administrative system also the handwritings and styles of individual scribes attached to particular services, doubtlessly must have been a means of identification and categorization, occasionally recognized even today by some Assyriologists⁵⁵ on the basis of the original tablets (traditional cuneiform copies usually tend to distort such individual traits).

A specific way of marking documents was observed by Charpin at Mari: red stripes drawn over the full length of small account tablets which record single items and transactions. His convincing interpretation is that records thus marked had been filed and digested in the larger ledger-tablets and could be discarded or stored away⁵⁶. The use of tablets of particular shapes, sizes, lay-outs and even styles of writing for specific administrative purposes is attested throughout Mesopotamian history, but has to be analysed per period. Its beginnings go back to the earliest stages of cuneiform writing^{56a}. For Old Akkadian features ("imperial style"), I refer to Foster's contribution to this volume⁵⁷. Good examples from Ur III are the so-called "round tablets" from 'Lagash', exclusively used for the assessment of plots of fields and their (expected) yield, in a way which evokes comparison with standard forms, since the figures for the grain (še.bi), as discovered by Maekawa, were added slightly later⁵⁸. There is, moreover, the clear distinction between the small account tablets for recording single or daily transactions, and the multi-column ledger tablets. Typical for the Old Babylonian period are, apart from the remarkable "Quasi-Hüllentafel" discovered by Wilcke, and the *ze'pu*-letters, i.e. the "dockets" used in particular for the administration of labor performed by hired

⁵⁵ See e.g. S. Parpola's "distinctive feature analysis" applied to the writers belonging to the "inner circle" of the correspondents of Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal, in *Letters from Assyrian Scholars to the Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal*, II (AOAT 5/2; Neukirchen, 1983), Appendix M. In his commentary also paleographic arguments are used for assigning letters to particular writers.

⁵⁶ D. Charpin, 'Une pratique administrative méconnue', *MARI* 3 (1984), 258 ff., with additional remarks in his study of the archives of Asqudum, to appear in *MARI* 4 (1985).

^{56a} See M.W. Green, 'The Construction and Implementation of the Cuneiform Writing System', *Visible Language* 15 (1981), 345 ff.

⁵⁷ See also his observations in 'Archives and Record Keeping in Sargonic Mesopotamia', *ZA* 72 (1982), 1 ff., esp. 3 f.

⁵⁸ G. Pettinato, *Die runden Tafeln* (AnOr 45; Roma, 1969); K. Maekawa, *AJS* 4 (1982), 98 ff., in particular 101, IV, 2.

workers⁵⁹. For Neo-Assyrian times, I refer to Postgate's description of the difference in physical appearance of the various types of legal documents⁶⁰ and to the unique format of the so-called "queries" used for recording questions put by later Neo-Assyrian kings to the sungod and his subsequent answer in the form of an omen report^{60a}. Such features are also helpful to the present-day Assyriologist, who would derive much profit from a well illustrated, diachronic "Urkundenlehre" of cuneiform tablets, which is a serious desideratum.

A convenient way of making tablets in an archive easily identifiable was inscribing a short note on the edge which was best in sight. This may apply already to Early Dynastic records in view of the position of some colophons⁶¹ and to some large account tablets from Ebla, where the final date (the month-name) occasionally occupied a prominent, isolated position on or near the upper edge of the tablet⁶². Many OB administrative texts from the "early Isin craft archive" (BIN 9, passim) have short notes on their "left" edge (presumably their upper edge, if we assume "vertical" writing and filing), which mention the date, give a summary (numbers of animals whose hides had been processed), or designate the tablet as "copy" (gaba.ri). For still later periods we may refer to the well-known Aramaic epigraphs of the seventh and later centuries B.C., inscribed with stylus or pen on the edges of cuneiform tablets, which no doubt served easy identification by those less familiar with the cuneiform writing system⁶³.

Distribution of records over various containers was observed by E. A. W. Budge at Tell ed-Dēr, where each jar would have contained the archives of one person⁶⁴. Elsewhere he mentions the occurrence of jars with the names of the persons involved in the transaction written on the outside⁶⁵. While these data cannot be

⁵⁹ C. Wilcke, in: *Zikir šumim. Festschrift F. R. Kraus* (Leiden, 1982), 450 ff.; see for *ze'pu*-letters, Finkelstein, *YOS* 13 (1972), 4 ff.; Kraus, *AbB* 7, p. 143 ad no. 180; Stol, *AbB* 9, 92 ad no. 145. See for the "dockets", M. Weitemeyer, *Aspects of the Hiring of Workers* in the Sippar Region (Copenhagen, 1962). See also M. de J. Ellis, elsewhere in this volume, note 16.

⁶⁰ J. N. Postgate, *Fifty Neo-Assyrian Legal Documents* (Warminster, 1976), 3 ff., § 1.2.

^{60a} Cf. J. Aro, in: *La divination en Mésopotamie ancienne et dans les régions voisines* (CRAI 14; Paris, 1966), 110.

⁶¹ See S. A. Picchioni, *OrNS* 49 (1980), 225 ff., esp. 243, with conclusions on the direction of writing, for which one may also consult M. A. Powell, *Visible Language* 15/4 (1981), 424 f.

⁶² See e.g. *ARET* 4 (1984), nos. 4, 5, 10, 13 and 15. The final summary (ending with the monthname) usually occupies the last, upper column(s) of the reverse (with the columns in horizontal position). The month-names in the texts mentioned in *ARET* 4 are said to be on "verso, bordo s.", but as is clear from no. 4 on pl. VIII, this refers to the "left edge" of the tablet as printed (with vertical columns), which in fact is the upper (horizontal) edge according to Matthiae's description in this volume (§ 4).

⁶³ See L. Delaporte, *Épigraphes araméens* (Paris, 1912); S. J. Lieberman, *BASOR* 192 (1968), 25-31; F. Vattioni, 'Epigrafia Aramaica', in: *Augustinianum* 10 (1970), 493-532.

⁶⁴ See his description in *The Rise and Progress of Assyriology* (London, 1925), 142; attempts to move the jars ("with coverings fixed in position with bitumen") without emptying them resulted in their collapse. The Middle-Assyrian archive of Mutta (archive no. 2 in Postgate's contribution to this volume) consisted of 112 tablets in one jar, all dating from one single year.

⁶⁵ E. A. W. Budge, *ZA* 3 (1888), 213 ("in some excavations which have been made within the last year or two").

checked we have good evidence for the latter custom from Ashur around 1100 B.C. The ca. 650 records of the archives of Ezbu-leshir, head of the administration of the "regular gifts" (*rab ginā'ē*) of the Assur temple, were discovered in a group of ten jars, at least three of which had an inscription on the outside. That on Ass 18782 = KAH II no. 64 reads "holder(?) of sealed records concerning settlements" (*bīt kanikāte ša nikkassī*)⁶⁶.

More common was the use of inscribed tags or labels for indentifying groups of tablets. They are attested for libraries, also in Boghazköy⁶⁷, some attached to bundles or perhaps baskets of tablets belonging to one series, others simply placed beside them on a shelf or bench. From Mesopotamia proper, in particular from the centuries around 2000 B.C., we know many labels originally attached to baskets or coffers. Some are still recognizable as such from the perforations for the strings by means of which they were attached to the containers (cf. UET 3, 53, 54, 56; Sigrist, TĒN no. 451)⁶⁸. Others, in particular during the earlier periods, were stuck to the basket as a sealing, as is clear from the impression of a reed pattern on their flat reverse, and may have secured the cords which closed the container in order to protect its contents⁶⁹.

Such labels, frequently not recognizable as such from the cuneiform copies, especially when they are inscribed on both sides, are easily identifiable by their inscriptions. They almost invariably start with the sentence "tablet basket/coffer which contains ..." (*ḫiṣan.dub.ba...i.(in.)gál*), usually followed by a date, occasionally also by the names of persons (officials) involved and the accounting period covered. Their name, "pisanduba-labels", is derived from this inscription and the tablet basket itself was considered so characteristic of the function of the administrator who had to process and file its contents, that it earned him his title *pisandubba*, *psanda/uba*, in Akkadian *šandabakku*⁷⁰. He was an important figure in the bureaucracy who might acquire wider, even political powers⁷¹.

⁶⁶ See for this archive E. Weidner, 'Amts- und Privatarhive aus Mittelasyrischer Zeit', in *Festschrift V. Christian* (Wien, 1956), 112f. and J. N. Postgate, *BiOr* 37 (1980), 68f., and his contribution to this volume (archive no. 1). From Middle-Assyrian times we also have references to chests or boxes (*quppātu*) for storing tablets (Weidner, *op. cit.* 113 with note 6, referring to KAJ 310, which mentions 25 pieces, perhaps a depot).

⁶⁷ See the two labels, one of the series *Enūma Anu Enlil*, the other for the omen series *Šumma ālu*, published by Craig, AAT pl. 1. For labels at Boghazköy, see H. G. Güterbock, *MDOG* 72 (1933), 37f.

⁶⁸ Falkenstein, *NSGU* 1, 17, mentions a specimen where the charred remains of the string by means of which it had been attached to the basket were still visible.

⁶⁹ See for a description BRM 3, p. 10f., 14f. An example from Early Dynastic Lagash with the impression of a reed pattern is LB no. 10, communicated by Böhl, *Mededeelingen uit de Leidsche Verzameling van Spijkerschriftinscripties* (Amsterdam, 1933) p. 9. See for other labels from that period J. Bauer, *Altsumerische Wirtschaftstexte aus Lagasch* (Roma, 1972), nos. 25, 102 and 166. For Sargonic labels see Foster, *op. cit.* (note 57), 11-22, with important conclusions on filing criteria and accountability.

⁷⁰ Cf. for his title Kraus, *op. cit.* (note 13), 72f., with W. Farber, *BiOr* 34 (1977), 338a and S. Lieberman, *The Sumerian Loanwords in Old Babylonian Akkadian* (Missoula, 1977), 181 no. 105, esp. A, 5, 6.

⁷¹ See for him i.a. I. J. Gelb in E. Lipiński (ed.), *op. cit.* (note 15), I, 14 (in early temples immediately

The ca. 300 basket labels known today are important because, according to Nelson who made a special study of them, they "are evidence of a filing system, for in reality they are archive labels"⁷². The majority, ca. 180, from Lagash, are said to reflect a well organized temple administration of considerable size, in which some twenty temples figure. Nelson distinguishes them into almost thirty different categories, subdivided for provenance from various cities. Seventeen of his categories are based on mostly well known key terms in records and ledgers, such as "inspection", "balanced account", "rations", "disbursements", "deliveries", also "final verdicts". The remainder are miscellaneous categories mainly derived from the subject matter, such as "cattle and herdsmen", "temples and establishments", "fields, farms, orchards".

The picture is rather diffuse. Homogeneous categories which correlate with well known types of records and transactions occur alongside less familiar ones and combinations of various types. A number of them is restricted to Lagash, which is partly due to the abundance of material from that city which yielded about two thirds of all known and where, moreover, temples figure predominantly in the documentation preserved. Contrast the almost complete absence of labels from Nippur, a fact no doubt related to the preponderance of private records in the material from that city. Even in Lagash there is variation, notably in the classification of the so-called "long tablets", designated after persons involved, goods or materials handled, the place of the transaction, or the controller, while there are also combinations of these features. The classification of the records to some extent remains opaque to us and to some extent may reflect practical needs and *ad hoc* solutions of the administration rather than centrally imposed principles of categorization.

The recovery of the administrative procedures from the labels alone seems impossible, also because there is practically no information about their findspots, that means about their association with particular buildings or archives. We have not a single label found *in situ* together with the contents of the tablet basket to which it was attached. The labels are to be studied as a function of a complex administrative system with its own categories and taxonomies⁷³. It aimed at registering all movements of persons and goods to keep check on and to steer the

under the sanga); *šandabakku*'s with a political career e.g. are Babati (*JCS* 28 [1976], 178; 35 [1983], 91 ff.) and DINGIR-am from Uruk (*BagM* 2 [1963], 36). For Mari see *ARMT* 1, 109 on the appointment of a *šandabakku*, and *ARMT* 18, p. 235f. on the powers of the well-known Jasim-Sumū; for a career of an OB *šandabakku*, cf. Charpin *JAOS* 100 (1980), 466 with note 26.

⁷² R. C. Nelson, *Pisan-dub-ba Texts from the Sumerian Ur III Dynasty* (Diss. 1976, Minnesota; UM 76-27.824) with Idem, 'Inventory of pisan.dub.ba Texts', in *Studies in Honor of Tom B. Jones (AOAT 202; Neukirchen, 1979)*, 43-56, building on earlier studies, notably N. Schneider, 'Die Urkundenbehälter von Ur III und ihre archivalische Systematik', *OrNS* 9 (1940), 1-24. A number of labels quoted by Nelson as unpublished have since been edited notably by D. Owen, *MVN* 11 (Roma, 1982), nos. A-I, R-T, X, CC-DD.

⁷³ M. Civil, in *L'Archéologie de l'Iraq ...* (Colloque CNRS; Paris, 1980), 231.

use of manpower, materials and products in the various bureaux, workshops, services, temples, etc. This created a continuous stream of records which induced the (central) administrations which had to process and file them to produce a variety of ledgers, monthly and annual surveys, balanced accounts and registers of personnel in order to make stocktaking, checks on production and consumption and also a certain amount of economic planning possible⁷⁴. The use of "filing baskets" provided with labels was an expedient for collecting or keeping together records of the same date or dealing with a particular type of transactions, a specific group of persons, etc. Whether all can be considered "archive labels" is a different question. It could be assumed on the basis of labels of baskets with di.til.la-records, which are commonly held to represent the archives of the judiciary authorities in Girsu, systematic collections of recorded cases or verdicts, arranged by year or judges acting and marked by labels⁷⁵. On the other hand, one could also consider baskets with tablets collections of related records made per workshop or service unit and marked by labels for shipment to the centres of administration. We know that baskets were used for transport of tablets^{75a} and from the Palace of Nestor at Pylos there is archaeological evidence for tablet baskets identified by "transport labels"⁷⁶. The baskets then would have served only temporary (transport) purposes and their labels may have been discarded once they had been opened. This leaves the question open what happened to the numerous records of individual transactions after their data had been filed. They may have been stored away in archive rooms, possibly even in the baskets in which they had arrived and with (new?) labels. But we lack good archaeological evidence for such "archive baskets", even from the "archival building" at Girsu, where tablets were reportedly found laid out in rows on mudbrick benches. Nor do we have additional written information on the organization of Ur III archives which would allow us to interpret the pisanduba-labels as such. The only clear indication we have is that archives were arranged chronologically (see note 45) and this links up with the specification on many labels that their baskets contain records covering particular accounting periods, frequently one whole year. But this arrangement may as well go back to the office or service where the records originated or were collected for shipment.

Attempts to link the labels with known archival documents on the basis of identity of transactions and persons involved have not been very successful, even where much

⁷⁴ See in general T. B. Jones, *op. cit.* (note 10) and his 'Bookkeeping in Ancient Sumer', *Archaeology* 9 (1956), 16-21.

⁷⁵ Cf. the interpretation by Falkenstein, *NSGU* I, 17f.

^{75a} See note 52 and also the interesting reference in *AfO* 22 (1968/9), 4 III: 2f.

⁷⁶ See Palaima-Wright, *op. cit.* (note 49), 260f. From the early OB period we know a basket label inscribed with the text "basket with cancelled tablets, to be destroyed" (⁶pisān im.sar.ra sihiātum zi.re.dè, YOS 5, 58), and Nelson, *op. cit.* (1976), no. 61, is a ⁶pisān.dub.ba é.TUM dub.zi.ri. Such baskets by definition cannot have been meant for storage in an archive.

material has survived (e.g. from Girsu). This may be due to our incomplete understanding of the role of many officials, in particular on a more elementary administrative level. Their activities, moreover, are frequently indicated by rather vague terms, such as "conveyed/verified(?) by" (gir), "in/through the hands of" (šu), or "in the presence of" (igi). Some titles or occupations, such as šà.tam, šabra, sukkal and even dub.sar are not specific enough to our taste for a reconstruction of the bureaucratic procedures, while also the seal practice still poses problems, partly due to "intricacies of the operational system"⁷⁷. The steadily growing number of records, however, is encouraging and allows promising approaches, such as the reconstruction of one particular bureau or workshop or a systematic analysis of the large ledgers and comprehensive balanced accounts⁷⁸.

The bureaucratic procedures of the Ur III empire set a standard for future administrators. In the following centuries, notwithstanding political fragmentation and reduction of scale, they survived as e.g. the "craft archive" from early Isin shows⁷⁹. Bookkeeping techniques and terminology (frequently still in Sumerian, but occasionally translated into Akkadian, in particular in Assyria) were kept up, in particular by the accountants of the "large institutions", for the registration of the movements of goods and persons. The traditions of the bureaucracy, fed by the principles of accountability and the need, inherent to the hierarchical system, to make facts and figures verifiable, continued to create large archives, now also of wealthy individuals or families. Occasionally texts shed some light on the use and usefulness of such extensive recording (in connection with census, distribution of land or rations, taxation, trade and credit, lawsuits), but at other times questions about its purpose and function hardly can be suppressed. They have recently been formulated by Sasson in connection with the analysis of the so-called "kitchen archives" from the OB palace at Mari⁸⁰. He discovered that the accuracy in

⁷⁷ P. Steinkeller, 'Seal Practice in the Ur III Period', in M. Gibson-R. D. Biggs, *Seals and Sealing in the Ancient Near East (BiMes 6; Malibu, 1977)* 42f. The frequent loss of envelopes deprives us of useful and at times apparently surprising information. D. Owen, *JCS* 24 (1972), 133f., was able to show how a "letter-order" after having been opened was turned into a receipt by putting it in a new case, sealed by the recipient of the item ordered. See also Van de Mieroop's remarks in this volume on the seal practice in the craft archive from Isin, and in *OLP* 15 (1984), 55ff. on an Ur III letter-order in envelope.

⁷⁸ See e.g. the analysis of 'the basic organization at Drehem' in T. B. Jones-J. W. Snyder, *Sumerian Economic Texts from the Third Dynasty of Ur* (Minneapolis, 1961), 212ff. and D. Loding, *A Craft Archive from Ur* (Diss. Pennsylvania 1974; UM 75-14.588). Cf. also D. M. McGuiness, *Studies in Neo-Sumerian Administrative Machinery* (Diss. 1976, Minnesota; UM 77-19.062), focussing on Umma and its "family society" dominated by the ensi, with due attention to the seal-impressions. Numerous recent studies could be added, also from Japanese assyriologists. Recently McGuiness published an article on 'Archival Interrelationships during Ur III' (*JANES* 13 [1981], 53-66), based on ch. 1 of his dissertation.

⁷⁹ See M. van de Mieroop, elsewhere in this volume. Note in particular his interesting observations on the use of copies, sealed tablets, and "Sammeltafeln".

⁸⁰ J. M. Sasson, 'Accounting Discrepancies in the Mari NĪ.GUB [NĪG.DU] Texts', in *Zikir šumim. Festschrift F. R. Kraus* (Leiden, 1982), 326ff. See for the archive in question also R. R. Glaeseman, *The Practice of the King's Meal at Mari* (Diss. UCLA 1978; UM 78-20220).

recording incoming and outgoing items at times was rather poor. Notable differences proved to exist between the records of the individual, mostly daily entries and their recapitulation in ledgers and monthly accounts, as witness incomplete or wrong figures. Apparently "the Mari scribe did not feel inordinately constrained to be accurate in registering outlays of food, and in computing their totals. ... We find numerous examples in which he calculated inaccurately, copied carelessly, shuffled indiscriminately, and resorted to short-cut measures to save linear space or to fill temporal gaps" (p. 340). This raises the question of the purpose of the whole bookkeeping enterprise, of the possibility of really balancing incoming food supplies and outgoing rations, where perhaps only half of the "originals" are registered into lists, and in the end of the reason why all these records were preserved over a period of several years. No doubt the same questions apply to comparable archives in other places and from other periods.

The excavations of the palace of Mari have brought to light a number of archives in various rooms, apart from the diplomatic ones and those of the kitchen (or of "the king's meal") mentioned above. The ca. twenty thousand tablets unearthed comprise archives from various rooms, bureaux and services. Some are easily identifiable by persons acting, by subject matter, or by information about their provenance from a particular room. A good example is the "custom's archive" published by M. Murton Burke⁸¹, whose find-spot seems to be unknown. It consists of "letters of clearance" supplied to owners or masters of boats with commercial cargo upon payment of an import duty (*miksum*) near the point where the Euphrates entered Mari territory. The letters apparently had to be handed in to the official of the central administration, Iddiniatum, to whom they were addressed, upon the boat's arrival in Mari. In other cases a reconstruction of archives poses problems, due to incomplete archaeological records of the find-spots or to displacement and transfer of groups of tablets both in antiquity (secondary use of old records; confusion created by Hammurabi's clerks) and during or after the excavations⁸². It is also regrettable that the find-spots of many of the sealings which secured the doors of archival rooms cannot be recovered, since it makes correlation between tablets, rooms and responsible officials much more difficult⁸³. But we may expect that a systematic analysis of the documents and their prosopography in combination with the archaeological data available and obtained in recent years, eventually will yield a clearer picture of the archival situation at Mari. The suggestion made by Rouault⁸⁴, that the apparent lack of system or disorder to

⁸¹ ARMT 13 nos. 58-101, with *Syria* 41 (1964), 67-103, and *MARI* 2 (1983), 151-163.

⁸² See the remarks in ARMT 23, p. 1f. (*Archives administratives de Mari*, 1) and in general for the archival situation the contribution by J. Margueron elsewhere in this volume.

⁸³ See D. Beyer, 'Scelllements de portes du palais de Mari', in *MARI* 4 (Paris, 1985) (forthcoming), and A. Malamat, elsewhere in this volume.

⁸⁴ ARMT 18 p. 250, note 100, in a discussion of the place of Mukannišum (now known to have had the title of *šatammum*, cf. ARMT 21 no. 398: 1-4; see also *MARI* 2 [1983] 127 note 14) in the administrative

some extent may have been intentional, devised in order to limit access to vital written information to a small group of trusted officials, (fortunately) seems to lack good evidence. Some interesting letters, discussed by Sasson (see above, note 42), do indicate that taking sealed (baskets with) tablets out of archival rooms was checked and supervised by various officials, but this does not prove deliberate "fragmentation of the information". The procedures are well explainable from the nature of the texts, such as "baskets with the total number of census lists" (*pišannātim ša napharat tēbibtum*, ARM 10, 82:13f.⁸⁵) and from the illiteracy of many officials, pointed out by Sasson, which required secretarial assistance for the identification of records and perhaps mutual checking (so Rouault).

These observations focus the attention on the key figures of the administration, the scribes. We know dozens, hundreds of them by name, also from their seal inscriptions and much attention has been paid to their education as reconstructed from practice tablets from the school and from the so-called "é.dub.ba essays". Their role in the administration and their position in society, which may range from that of a simple clerk or a paid letter writer on the market to that of a chief-accountant or secretary of a chancery or king, is more difficult to assess. What interests us here is the relation between the clerk, bookkeeper or accountant and his superiors. There is clear evidence from the Ur III period that many high officials were recruited from the ranks of the scribes, which implies that they were able to find, use and check written information independently. The general impression, which needs further proof, is that during the subsequent OB period this was less systematically the case. This would make officials much more dependent on their scribes and independent checks on recording, balancing and stocks by others than the accountants directly involved problematic. The laborious bookkeeping and accumulation of records may have served more and more purely internal purposes, also in order to satisfy the traditional requirements of matching figures and tallying balances, felt primarily by those directly responsible for their own archives⁸⁶.

system. In ARM 10, 12:8ff. he functions as *ebbum*, "controller", accompanying an attaché of the king sent to take some baskets of tablets out of one of the archival rooms.

⁸⁵ These tablets are kept in a *bit tuppātim* (1.5) which is sealed. After the room has been opened a certain Igmilum, belonging to the "secretariat" (*bit iértim*), points out the baskets in question, whereupon the addressee of the letter, Inibšina, sends the king the sealed records which have to be processed and assessed (*kunukki ša bulluṭim*; so with Durand, *MARI* 3 [1984], 260f. and not *šābulūtim*, "dried, baked", proposed in ARMT 18, 234).

⁸⁶ See for the role of the scribes after the Ur III period in particular Kraus, *op. cit.* (note 13), 18ff., and above note 71. N. Schneider, *OrNS* 15 (1946), 89ff. demonstrated that during the Ur III period many scribes were sons of city governors, temple officials, military leaders etc., which may have favoured their administrative career. C. J. Gadd, *Teachers and Students in the Oldest Schools* (London, 1956), 23, assumes that the situation was not much different during the OB period, but this requires further study. See for the situation in Sippar R. Harris, *Ancient Sippar* (Istanbul, 1975), 284-302, with the remarks by M. Stol., *BiOr* 33 (1976), 152f., also on careers (dub.sar becoming dumu é.dub.ba, "secretary"), but note the observations by D. Charpin, *JAOS* 100 (1980), 467ff. on the question of such careers and the meaning of titles and occupational designations.

Important for a reconstruction of the political history and the royal administration are the archives of the chancellery. A definition, however, of what that may have been in ancient Mesopotamia is not easy, as the existence of various archives in the palace of Mari shows, where, moreover, the official correspondence was probably found in secondary position, in room 115. Not everything relating to the activities and administration of a palace necessarily belonged to the competence of the chancellery which will have dealt primarily with political matters and the administration of the realm. We can, moreover, assume a gradual differentiation from one general palace archive (a stage apparently already passed in Ebla, where several "tablet rooms" are attested), to the coexistence of several administrative units or bureaux, each with their own archives and personnel, for which the palace of Ugarit provides good evidence (archives of international documents, of legal deeds such as land transfers, of records of the palace administration, etc.). Kraus⁸⁷, who suggests for the OB period close links or even identity with the é.dub.ba.a of the residence, describes the chancellery as a scribal office whose tasks comprised not only the usual bookkeeping, accounting and filing (which implies archives), but also the production of official compositions (royal inscriptions in the broadest sense) and the promulgation of official texts (such as the year-names). On the analogy of imperial Rome we could visualize a scribal office headed by the king's or the palace's senior scribe as chancellor, where incoming documents were read, digested, and filed, and official texts (letters, charters, legal records, inscriptions) were composed, multiplied and promulgated. Its head may have had the royal seal at his disposal and have served as the king's secretary and even adviser (an *ummānum* of the type of Achiqar). Such a picture implies a fairly large scribal staff (at least for great palaces such as those of Mari and Nineveh), the existence of a scriptorium, and archives which, in view of the literary and historiographic tasks and interests, may have incorporated what we would call library material⁸⁸. How rewarding a systematic analysis of chancellery archives can be for historical interpretation and for a reconstruction of the administrative structures (including its personnel and the composition of the army) has become clear in recent studies on official letters, administrative records and various lists (rations, inspection, etc.)⁸⁹.

⁸⁷ *Op. cit.* (note 13) 23ff. See for a sketch of a palace chancery of the Neo-Assyrian period J. V. Kinnier Wilson, *The Nimrud Wine Lists* (CTN 1; London, 1972), 62ff.

⁸⁸ See elsewhere in this volume the contributions by Parpola (on library and archives) and Reade (on royal scriptoria).

⁸⁹ See e.g. S. Parpola, 'Assyrian Royal Inscriptions and Neo-Assyrian Letters', in M. Fales (ed.), *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions: New Horizons* (Roma, 1981), 117ff.; idem, *Letters from Assyrian Scholars to the Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal*, II (AOAT 5/2; Neukirchen, 1983); J. M. Sasson, 'Year: "Zimri-Lim Offered a Great Throne to Shamash of Mahnum". An overview of one year at Mari', part I, in *MARI 4* (Paris, 1985) (forthcoming); J.-M. Durand, 'Les dames du palais de Mari à l'époque du royaume de haute Mésopotamie', *ibidem*; J. V. Kinnier-Wilson, *op. cit.* (note 87), with S. Dalley-J. N. Postgate,

Archives discovered in palaces frequently comprise a number of apparently private legal documents. Examples are the "textes juridiques" (ARM 8) from Mari and numerous legal documents in the K-Collection from the palaces of Nineveh⁹⁰. Various explanations for their presence there have been advanced. Private persons might have stored their valuable records in official buildings for safekeeping. Authorities might have obliged their subjects to register contracts in the palace for keeping up a land registry or for reasons of taxation or conscription. Institutions such as temple and palace might have made and kept copies of the deeds executed within their confines, the originals of which were handed over to the contracting parties⁹¹. A palace in this way might have built up a legal archive, including also records of lawsuits, for consultation by judges, jurists, and administrators.

There probably is no uniform explanation. The documents in question exhibit a great variety and there must have been changes in procedure over the centuries. Depositing records in temples was not customary, though it may have occurred in later periods among people closely associated with the sanctuary and in emergency situations. This erroneous idea (which links up with ideas about a "temple city") may have been fostered for OB times by the interpretation of the archives of a class of well-to-do women dedicated to the sungod, discovered in Sippar. The special, walled quarter (called *gagûm*) where these ladies (called *nadîtu*) lived in their houses with their archives was wrongly considered part of the temple of Shamash^{91a}. A mistaken etymology and translation of the name of the symbolic weapon of this sungod, the saw (*šaššarum*), used in oath ceremonies (i.a. lawsuits about real property), was responsible for the assumption that there existed a land registry of the Shamash temple⁹². In general official registration of legal transactions did not occur before the Seleucid period; institutions such as the Greek *archeion* or

The Tablets from Fort Shalmaneser (CTN 3; London, 1984), on wine lists and horse lists. See for the palace archives of Nuzi W. Mayer, *Nuzi Studien I. Die Archive des Palastes und die Prosopographie der Berufe* (AOAT 205/1; Neukirchen, 1978). An "archival approach" proves to be indispensable for the study of the textual material discovered in the palace of Ebla.

⁹⁰ See for this group the contribution to this volume by T. Kwasman.

⁹¹ Interpretation proposed by M. Schorr, *VAB 5* (Leipzig, 1913), xxii, 6, who rejected the possibility that parties deposited their original deeds in the temple archives.

^{91a} R. Haïris, *JESHO 6* (1963), 153f., still mentions "the cloister's function of keeping records of transactions of the *nadîtu*'s" and the "safekeeping of the deeds of their inhabitants, probably in its administrative building". This idea, based on a wrong interpretation of CT 6,6:25 (title-deeds "in the *gagûm* with our sister" to all appearances were kept in her house), is not repeated in her *Ancient Sippar* (Istanbul 1975). She maintains that the "cloister" "must have been within the temple complex" and the existence of "an administrative staff to supervise the activities of the individual *nadîtu* women", without making clear what this implied (p. 188f.).

⁹² Schorr, *op. cit.* (note 91), xxiii and 349, where he assumes that the temple archive included groundplans of houses and field maps. See for *šaššarum*, which he connected with the Hebrew word *šāšar*, "red paste, minium" (p. 260 ad 7; actually represented by Akkadian *šarša/erru*), A. Walther, *Das altbabylonische Gerichtswesen* (LSS 6/4-6; 1917), 193 note 2.

dēmosion and obligatory registration (*anagrafē*) are unknown in earlier Mesopotamia⁹³.

The collection in palaces of legal documents, including judiciary records and verdicts of lawsuits, was no general practice. Normally such records are found in private archives where they were kept by their owners (at the same time the winners of the lawsuits) for evidentiary purposes. Even the Old Assyrian letter ICK I no. 182, written by the ruler of Assur and addressed to *kārum* Kanish, was discovered in a private archive, that of the trader Imdilum, apparently because it communicated a legal decision by the City Council of Assur which affected him and granted him the right to obtain an attorney⁹⁴. Of course we can never rule out (but rarely prove) the possibility that copies or rescripts were made of important legal documents and that the authorities which had been involved in the procedure (as judges or as superiors of the persons acting) kept them in their files⁹⁵.

In some periods and situations the control of the "state" or palace on legal transactions of its subjects was fairly strict, in particular where immovable property and persons working for the palace were involved. In Ugarit, during the Late Bronze Age—a period characterized by a more "feudal" structure—many land transfers, also between individuals, were witnessed or even initiated by the king and discovered in the so-called "central archives" of the palace⁹⁶. This suggests that the land involved was (at one time) held on condition (the holding entailing obligations or services) and that the official owner retained a certain right to control the disposition. Unfortunately we only have the deeds of transfer from the palace and no contemporary private archives, so that we cannot prove the likely suggestion that the new possessors too obtained written proof of their rights.

For the Neo-Assyrian period Postgate observes that in most cases we have to assume either that the main persons of the contracts acted *ex officio* or that the private archives in question belonged to palace officials who simply kept them in their office. A similar explanation probably obtains for the legal documents from Mari, mentioned above. Unfortunately, frequently "there is no formal way in which private and public transactions of an Assyrian official can be distinguished and hence only indirect means can be used to decide one way or the other"⁹⁷.

⁹³ See above note 8.

⁹⁴ The letter was edited by M. Ichisar, *Les archives cappadociennes du marchand Imdilum* (Paris, 1981), 410f.

⁹⁵ The occurrences and functions of copies or rescripts of records deserve a special investigation. See elsewhere in this volume the observations by M. van de Mieroop. Kwasman notes that several documents of the archive of Rēmanni-Adad have duplicates.

⁹⁶ See J. Nougayrol, *PRU* 3 (Paris, 1955), 23f., and the observations by van Soldt in this volume.

⁹⁷ *Iraq* 32 (1970), 35; cf. his remarks in *The Governor's Palace Archive* (CTN 2; London, 1973), 12f. There is no reason to assume, with Posner, *Archives* (above note 8), 40, that the *rab alāni* functioned as "chief land registrar". Kwasman, in this volume, notes that most legal archives in the K-Collection from Nineveh belong to members of the royal chariotry, documenting their acquisitions of land and slaves in the various places where they had been stationed and apparently ultimately taken back to Nineveh.

Evidence for forms of "state" control on legal transactions of subjects is also available from Eshnunna and Assur. In the former city one discovered an early OB archive of unique real estate transactions involving fields and houses. The deeds normally have two seal impressions, one by the seller and one by a palace official (called *kakikkum* for houses and *šassukkum* for fields), and in many ways are different from normal OB deeds of purchase. The witnesses mentioned did not seal the contract, the usual guaranty clauses etc. are missing, and the documents were discovered in the palace⁹⁸. This latter fact, together with the apparently obligatory sealing by an official who must have acted as official recorder and supervisor of real estate transactions⁹⁹, betrays a strong measure of state control. Some of the property sold is qualified as "(property) of the king" (in which case the officials mentioned also seal as sellers), and it is understandable that the palace wished to preserve written evidence of such transactions, even though this was not customary for private sellers. But the procedure is surprising for those cases where both seller and buyer seem to be private persons. We should, however, be careful in drawing more general conclusions on obligatory registration of deeds, state control on real estate transactions or use of private seals, etc. Unless the situation at Eshnunna was completely different from that in other OB citystates, it seems more likely that the documents concern specific property and or particular people¹⁰⁰. A more comprehensive study of the Eshnunna palace archives seems desirable. Excavations outside the palace might help to define the nature of this archive of a "title office", also by revealing whether the new private owners acquired their own (differently drafted?) copies of the title deeds, and who they were.

For Assur a stipulation in the so-called Middle Assyrian Laws (B, §6¹⁰¹) prescribes a complicated, bureaucratic procedure for the purchase of real property by its citizens, which implies a considerable measure of state intervention. Each prospective buyer is obliged to have his intentions publicly announced by the town-crier, no less than three times within one month, both in Assur and in the town where the property is situated. After that period a minister of the king, the city scribe and some other royal officials (*qēpūtu*), having witnessed the proclamations

⁹⁸ R. M. Whiting, 'Sealing Practices on House and Land Sale Documents at Eshnunna in the Isin-Larsa Period, in *Seals and Sealing* (above note 77), 67 ff.

⁹⁹ The *šassukkum* is equated with the *dub.sar a.šā.ga*, "administrator of the fields" (*MSL* 12, 99, 143; cf. M. Gallery, *Afo* 27 [1980], 15b), and functioned as (chief) field surveyor; cf. his activities as described in *AbB* 3, 55:18 ff.: *ašlam tarāšum u sikkatam maḥāšum*. The *kakikkum* according to an unpublished text from Eshnunna, quoted *CAD* K 43 f., was authorized to replace a (mistakenly) broken contract (*uddušum*). See for this function also Charpin, *Archives familiales* (below, note 119), 19 ff.

¹⁰⁰ The conclusions drawn by J. D. Muhly, *JAOS* 101 (1981), 401, about the possession and use of seals by private persons are unlikely generalizations from a rather specific situation.

¹⁰¹ See on this paragraph P. Garelli, *Semitica* 17 (1967), 7 ff.; J. N. Postgate *BSOAS* 34 (1971) 388 and 514 f., with his remarks in *Studies ... Diakonoff* (above note 33), 308 f., with a reference to a Middle Assyrian deed which prescribes the measuring of the fields and the obligation "according to the edict of the king to have the town-crier make an announcement".

and acting as (?) judges, draw up a written memorandum on the proclamation and its effect. If nobody has come forward with earlier rights or claims the property is considered legally free and, after having been measured by the royal measuring rope (as we know from contemporary deeds), finally can be purchased by drawing up of a "valid deed" (*tuppu dannutu*) before the king. This implies confirmation of the transaction by the authorities, perhaps in the form of sealing by the officials concerned, which evokes comparison with the procedure at Eshnunna, mentioned above. But, as Postgate observes, the role of the palace seems to be limited to that of an impartial arbiter, lending its authority to render the sale valid in the eyes of the law. There is no indication that this was a form of official registration in view of acquiring data for a royal land registry, though it offered the palace ideal opportunities of checking real estate transactions of its citizens. The question remains what happened to the records resulting from this form of state intervention. The text of the law breaks off when it starts to talk about the documents which the officials involved have to deliver. A possible solution, proposed by Cardascia¹⁰², is that palace, seller, and buyer each acquired one copy of the official memorandum on the proclamation, and this would mean that such texts should turn up in public and private archives. Unfortunately no tablets have been found in the private archives containing land sale documents which answer the description given in the law. We only have a piece of interesting information in an inventory (KAJ 310) listing i.a. boxes with tablets deposited in a special storeroom. One of the boxes contains "proclamations of the town-crier concerning houses in the City (of Assur)"¹⁰³. The archive belongs to the Ashur-aha-iddina family (no. 6 in Postgate's contribution to this volume), whose members held official functions, and the inventory also lists a box with tablets of the palace (line 26). This raises the possibility that the tablets in question were part of an official archive, but we cannot exclude the possibility that they were the copies belonging to their (private) owners, members of the family mentioned. A detailed study of the archive (Fundnummer Ass. 14327), promised by Postgate, may help to clarify the matter, further complicated by the remarkable absence of even one single "valid deed" of purchase in the private archives. What exactly was the role of the palace and its archives in relation to title deeds?

Whenever administrative measures by the palace resulted in some form of land registry it seems to have been of limited scope: no complete cadastral files or maps, no obligatory consultation when real estate was sold, no basis for imposing general land taxes, etc. The control normally linked up with the special status of the property or its possessor. The extensive lists resulting from the census (*tēbibtum*) at

¹⁰² *Les lois assyriennes* (LAPO 2; Paris, 1969), 275.

¹⁰³ See for this document and the data on the boxes with tablets E. Weidner in *Festschrift Christian* (above note 66) 113. Lines 19f. read: *1 tuppu ša sassu nāgiri ša bētāti ša alibbi-āli*.

Mari essentially served military conscription and to some extent also the allotment of fields to certain conscripts¹⁰⁴. The chancery of Babylon under Hammurabi apparently had at its disposal some kind of register of fields covering "crown lands" allotted to various categories of civil servants (officials, conscripts, tenants of the crown) in exchange for particular services or a fixed share in their yields. Kraus¹⁰⁵ describes it as "ein Katastar des gesamten Lehnlandes in irgendeiner Form, ... der als "Grundbuch" diente" and which was consulted in case of complaint, disagreement or change. We do not know, however, whether it consisted of a complete series of (copies of) individual "tablets of allotment" (*tuppi isihim*) or a register in which they had been digested¹⁰⁶. Comparable lists must have existed of other servants of the crown who had entered a contractual arrangement with the crown in a variety of capacities without being rewarded by allotments of land (cf. above note 39). From the palace at Nineveh we know at least two registers describing and listing fields and villages, with their inhabitants and personnel, in the district of Harran. Recent investigations¹⁰⁷ have made it likely that these registers, called *Assyrian Doomsday Book* by their first editor, were lists of landed property which enjoyed immunities such as accorded by the Neo-Assyrian royal land grants. The census in question accordingly had a particular scope and covered only part of the district. We are not allowed to conceive the countryside as completely divided up into *latifundia* granted to Assyrian nobles and worked by their dependents.

According to some archival historians systematic registration of records may well have been introduced by those responsible for the jurisdiction, in order to have depositions, verdicts, and contracts endorsed by judges on file in view of precedents, appeals or cases reopened. Evidence for this view from ancient Mesopotamia in general is very weak, though judiciary records occasionally turn up in what must

¹⁰⁴ See for the *tēbibtum* at Mari J.-R. Kupper, *Les Nomades en Mesopotamie au temps des rois de Mari* (Paris, 1957), 23 ff. (where the religious aspects are rather heavily stressed) and the evidence in ARMT 1 nos. 6 and 7.

¹⁰⁵ In P. Garelli (ed.), *Le Palais et la Royauté* (Paris, 1974), 260.

¹⁰⁶ It is not easy to reconstruct the procedure from the official letters, published in AbB 4, which are our main source. Apart from the documentation in the palace at Babylon, based on decisions and assignments made "before the king" (7:8 ff.) and details on the actual assignments in the provinces reported back to Babylon by the regional administrators (11:27 ff.; 32:6 ff.), there must have been a local or regional registration (22). It comprised the "tablets of allotment" which the king sent to his regional administrators in order to inform them about his decisions which had to be implemented (8:15 f.; 26:5 ff.; 94:15 f.; 100:9 ff.(!); 103:13 f.). It is possible that they consisted (partly?) of official royal letters which contained the decision by the king (94:23: "this tablet of allotment"), perhaps of the type of 49 and 89 or the tablet quoted in 130. Finally we must assume that the beneficiaries themselves received a sealed deed of allotment (17:12; 37:8,19; 51:9; 79:6 f.). The details remain to be analysed (what exactly is a *tuppi pilkātīm*, 50:11; 99:8 ff.?), also the relation between records dealing with larger units or districts (*ugārum*) and groups of servants under a superior and those referring to individual fields and persons. "Registers of service allotments" (*tuppi ilkātīm*, 117:7; cf. *tuppātīm ša ilkim*, 11:4) were not restricted to government institutions; a temple archive, too, could contain such documents (118:11, 17 f.).

¹⁰⁷ See F. M. Fales, *Censimenti e catasti di epoca neo-assira* (Roma, 1973) with the important reviews by J. N. Postgate, *JESHO* 17 (1974), 225 ff. and S. Parpola, *ZA* 64 (1975), 96 ff.

have been official archives. The one exception is a collection of some two hundred court records in the form of "final verdicts" or "concluded cases" (in Sumerian *di.til.la*), found in ancient Girsu (Telloh) from the period of the Third Dynasty of Ur (second half 21st century B.C.). The collection is the remainder of an archive of the judiciary authorities and their scribes, systematically filed according to date (years) and judge officiating, as is clear from matching "basket labels" and quite a number of tablets which record a series of verdicts of the same date¹⁰⁸. The exact find-spot of the group is unknown, but may well have been the central archives of the local governor (*ensi*), ultimately responsible for the jurisdiction in his province (the collection included some *di.til.la*'s of cases tried in other cities of his realm). The generally very terse text of the verdicts is not informative enough for ancient (and modern) jurists for a full reconstruction of the trials¹⁰⁹. The archive must have served a practical purpose, presumably as a file to aid the memory of the judiciary authorities. In case of renewed trials, decisions challenged, or repeated appeals (not rare, e.g. when slave status was at stake) the files could produce essential information on earlier cases and verdicts and help to settle the new ones simply by the testimony of witnesses or judiciary officials engaged earlier, whose names were on record.

The presence of limited numbers of judiciary records in other official buildings or archives reflects various levels of involvement of the authorities in judiciary matters. The king was traditionally held responsible for the administration of justice and this is reflected in royal judgments (already in the Old Akkadian period; "laws" also are basically royal judgments), the existence of royal judges, and the "assignment" of cases to courts for trial¹¹⁰. Being invoked in the oath to prevent breach of contract, he could be appealed to by wronged parties. Some stipulations in legal compilations clearly implicate king or palace, as when "capital cases" are referred to the king's jurisdiction or when people are sentenced to perform hard labor for the king¹¹¹. The king's involvement grew when plaintiff or damaged party were not simply

¹⁰⁸ See the edition by A. Falkenstein, *Neusumerische Gerichtsurkunden*, I-III (München, 1956-7), with the review by F. R. Kraus, *BiOr* 15 (1958), 70-84. See for the "basket labels" of this collection Falkenstein, 17f. and Nelson, *op. cit.* (note 72), 5f., who attempts to draw from them conclusions on legal procedure. See also E. Sollberger, *Festschrift Kramer (AOAT 25; Neukirchen, 1976)*, 440.

¹⁰⁹ They are quite different from what have been called "literary *di.til.la*'s", sample court settlements recording proceedings of the assembly (*puhrum*) of Nippur, based on actual cases and incorporated in the law curriculum of the school. See M. Roth, *JAOS* 103 (1983), 279ff.

¹¹⁰ Th. Jacobsen, *Toward the Image of Tammuz* (Cambridge Mass., 1970), 194 with 198 lines 17ff. See also Falkenstein, *op. cit.* (note 108), 24ff. for the role of the king during the Ur III period.

¹¹¹ 'Laws of Eshnunna', § 48, *awat napištim ana šarrim*, "a matter of life (goes) to the king"; 'Middle Assyrian Laws', § A 18, 19, 21 and B 7, 9f., 14: *šipar šarrim epāšum*. See for fines payable to the palace in OB Uruk *Bag M* 2 (1963), 48f. The measure of a king's involvement of course is conditioned by the political realities, such as the difference between a small, early OB city-state, where the local ruler was present as chief judge, and an extended territorial state. In the latter the measure of bureaucratic control from the centre and of local autonomy may vary greatly.

subjects but servants of the crown, either palace officials, "crown tributaries", or holders of palace lands. Much of the documentary evidence on Hammurabi's activity as judge bears on such cases¹¹². On a lower level palace officials could act in various judiciary capacities or get involved in lawsuits, either as superiors of the persons acting or for their own account (in which case the records might belong to their private archives kept in their office). All such circumstances could account for archival holdings of judiciary records in palaces, but this is not borne out by archaeological discoveries. The archive of Girsu thusfar is an exception.

The situation is not different when we look at temples. We know from the texts that temples might be involved in judiciary procedures, but their role in general seems to have been limited to providing meeting facilities in the immediate vicinity of the divine symbol, essential for recovering the truth by means of the oath. Priests occurring as judges rarely seem to have acted as such *ex officio* and we do not know whether they were the ones to administer the oath or whether this was done by other members of the clergy. In general priests must have become judges as respected and experienced members of the community¹¹³. It is possible that the importance of the god's emblem for the oath ceremony and, more generally, their close association with the divine as source and guarantee of justice, originally was an important underlying motive of their judicial tasks. In historical times this was at most taken for granted and not formulated as a principle. It could not prevent a growing impact of the palace on the administration of justice, to which the king after all had excellent religious claims. For the Old Babylonian period the picture is somewhat distorted owing to the fact that about half of the number available judiciary records originates from (the) Sippar (area), a city with a very weak royal tradition, dominated by the temple of Shamash, god of justice. When texts refer to a "verdict of the Shamash temple", however, this may mean little more than that the court met in the vicinity of the awe inspiring symbol of the "lord of justice", and pronounced its verdict there¹¹⁴.

The normal pattern, in particular in earlier periods, was that justice was rendered by judges who were wise, respected, and independent representatives of the local

¹¹² W. F. Leemans 'King Hammurabi as Judge', in *Symbolae ... Martino David Dedicatae*, II (Leiden, 1968), 107ff. Leemans notes (121) the fact that when the king remits a case to the local judges or authorities he often asks for a report on the issue. Such reports (in the form of official letters), when found, could be considered to belong to the judiciary archives.

¹¹³ See A. Walther, *Das altbabylonische Gerichtswesen (LSS 6/4-6; Leipzig, 1917)*, 179ff., and G. Lautner, *Die richterliche Entscheidung und die Streitbeendigung im altbabylonischen Prozessrechte* (Leipzig, 1922), 73f. On p. 82 he quotes a text where the judges (as happens frequently) send parties to a temple-gate to perform an oath to be sworn before "the judges of the temple-gate", which hence seem to be distinguished from the ones conducting the trial (see his note 240).

¹¹⁴ See for the situation at Sippar, moreover complicated by the fact that many of the judiciary records belong to archives of the *nadīu*-women who had special links with the temple, R. Harris, *Ancient Sippar* (Istanbul, 1975), 116ff. Note from Mari ARM 8,85:46ff.: "The city (assembly) of Saggarātum convened and (king) Zimrilim passed sentence in the temple of Hanat".

community and that depositions by witnesses, records of the litigation, and verdicts became the property of the winners of a case, who kept this valuable evidence as confirmation of their rights in their private archives. And when and where the influence of the central administration grew this latter feature remained essentially unchanged. Our main source of judiciary records are private archives.

Private archives are already attested during the third millennium B.C., but become more numerous and substantial after ca. 2000 B.C. They range from small collections of a few records belonging to persons of modest means and status to substantial archives of wealthy families with large property holdings or a great measure of professional specialisation, as 'free entrepreneurs' or high officials of temple or palace. Such archives normally contain a number of older records alongside the bulk of those reflecting more recent or current activities. Their chronological depth at times is surprising, up to two centuries and six generations. The archives of Ur-Utu from Tell ed-Dēr contain title-deeds some two hundred years old¹¹⁶ and almost the same time span is covered by the Egibi archives from the Neo-Babylonian period (7th-5th century B.C.; see also note 46). The use of very old deeds is also documented in records of some lawsuits, where they were quoted or used as evidence¹¹⁷. The number of such old texts, however, was usually restricted, limited to a few title-deeds of early family property. The majority consists of documents covering the activities of the last generation or two, frequently not more than some fifty years, as is the case with the Old Assyrian archives discovered in Kanish.

The core of such archives consists of records with evidentiary value, carefully preserved, frequently in a sealed envelope. Some are title-deeds documenting purchase, exchange, donation or inheritance; others are proof of status, acquired by adoption or marriage¹¹⁸, which usually imply certain property rights; others again reflect successful litigation whereby rights and status were defended and officially confirmed. In addition they may contain various settlements, receipts, and quit-tances as proof of obligations discharged or payments and deliveries made. A nice

¹¹⁵ Usually in the form of sworn renunciations of claims by the losing party (*tuppi la ragāmim*) which comprise a succinct account of the trial, with the verdict and the names of the witnesses. See Lautner, *op. cit.* (note 113), 39 ff. and R. Veenker, *HUCA* 45 (1975), 1-16.

¹¹⁶ Personal communication by L. de Meyer. See also K. van Lerberghe, *AfOBeih.* 19 (1982), 280 ff. and idem, in: K. R. Veenhof (ed.), *Schrijvend Verleden* (Leiden/Zutphen, 1983), 143 ff., 'Immobiliëntransacties en eigendomstitels in de Oudbabylonische periode'.

¹¹⁷ In the trial recorded on YOS 13,96, conducted during the reign of king Samsu-ditana of Babylon, reference is made to a deed of purchase from the 20th year of king Sin-muballit, more than 170 years earlier. The archives of the descendants of Ili-amranni from Dilbat, analysed by M. J. Desroches, *Aspects of the Structure of Dilbat during the Old Babylonian Period* (Diss. UCLA; UM 78-20207), cover the period from Sumu-abum until Samsu-iluna of similar length (235 ff.).

¹¹⁸ According to S. Greengus, 'The Old Babylonian Marriage Contract', *JAOS* 89 (1969), 512b, the purpose of marriage documents "was not to record marriage but to record important transactions which could affect the status and rights of husbands or wives".

example of such an archival core is the collection of documents belonging to a certain Šilli-Ishtar from Kutalla (Tell Sifr). At a time of impending disaster, around 1740 B.C., he wrapped his valuable records in a reed-mat and hid them, together with a collection of copper objects, under a layer of mudbricks in his house¹¹⁹. He apparently never was able to recover them after his fears had come true. The majority of the seventy texts consists of the types of documents just mentioned, in particular records of acquisition of real estate. The period covered is perhaps about seventy years, but most texts are dated to the last twenty years of the last archive holder. A number of older records had been inherited from his father. These included a partition between the latter and his brothers and a few documents recording property rights of his father's adoptive mother, which ended up in his archive together with the deed of adoption which explains their presence there. A few other title-deeds of real estate in the name of other persons may have come into his possession when he acquired from them the property in question, as is suggested in the admirable edition and analysis of this archive by Charpin. They reflect the custom that conveyance of real property usually entails the transfer of the original or old title-deeds (in Dutch called "retroacten"), as we know from some cases where the impossibility or failure to do so caused a lawsuit. Such records, in Akkadian *tuppāt ummātim (u serdē)*, in the possession of others than the present owner, were a potential danger and they may have been needed for the correct identification of the property and its chain of previous owners¹²⁰. Charpin (*op. cit.*, 157 f.) presents evidence which suggests that the scribe drawing up a deed of conveyance of real property used or quoted such "old tablets" (as they are also called in contemporary documents).

Old, traditional family property frequently lacked such documentary proof of ownership, apart from subsequent inheritance deeds. When family property was (ultimately) divided deeds of partition had to be drawn up which could serve as such. When previously acquired real estate was divided among heirs, it would change hands together with the relevant title-deeds. From Nuzi we know a case where this happened between brothers and where the archive of the eldest of them contained receipts for such records signed by the younger ones¹²¹.

I designated Šilli-Ishtar's collection of tablets as the core of an archive, by which I mean a deliberately made selection of the most important documents which had to

¹¹⁹ D. Charpin, *Archives familiales et propriété privée en Babylonie ancienne. Étude des documents de "Tell Sifr"* (Genève-Paris, 1980). See for the hoard of copper tools P. R. S. Moorey, *Iraq* 33 (1971), 61-84.

¹²⁰ See the discussion of such cases and the exact meaning of what are called *tuppāt ummātim (u serdē)* by C. Wilcke, *op. cit.* (note 59), 450 ff., esp. 466 f. and 478 f., and the rather different interpretation by D. Charpin, elsewhere in this volume.

¹²¹ M. P. Maidman, 'A Nuzi Private Archive: Morphological Considerations', *Assur* 1 (1979), 179-186, esp. 184 f. On p. 182 f. with note 13 Maidman offers interesting observations on the presence in an archive of "old accounts", "background texts", and "records of real estate litigations".

survive disaster. This is suggested by the total absence of other types of texts normally represented in private archives: administrative texts, various contracts, and letters. The former usually include lists and memorandums and a variety of receipts. Contracts rarely missing, dependent on the archive holder's position, are those with debtors, hired labourers, tenant farmers, lessees, etc. Many of these usually were preserved for several years, apparently also after the contracts in question had expired and the obligations recorded had been discharged. They represent the usual variety of 'business papers' kept first for administrative purposes and later for their informative value, or simply because their owner could not bring himself to clear his archive.

How complex a private archive at times could be is clear from an interesting Old Assyrian record of a lawsuit instituted because of the illegal opening and removal of a trader's archive¹²². The archive in question contained a rich variety of records kept in sealed coffers, which included documents entrusted or given to the archive-holder by colleagues and agents, bonds in the name of anonymous "moneylenders" (ceded or pledged as security by insolvent debtors), certificates of payment ("tablets of satisfaction") supplied on payment of a debt when it was impossible to return the original bond, etc. It will be obvious that the background and use of such documents, taken out of their archival context, would have remained a riddle. This applies also to the many Old Assyrian memorandums drawn up for private use in the first person, where the identity of the "I" is often difficult to establish. The publication of complete Old Assyrian archives, excavated since 1948 by Turkish archaeologists, now furthered by the institution of a "Kultepe Tablets Publication Committee", may provide models of what such archives in principle could contain¹²³.

Letters are a regular component of private archives, in particular since the beginning of the second millennium B.C. They were preserved for reasons not essentially different from those which prompt us to do so. These include personal motives (letters of relatives) and the recognition of their informative value, in particular when their contents bear on other than purely domestic affairs. The Old Assyrian merchants in Kanish preserved large collections of business letters since they contained important information on their complicated affairs, together with instructions, promises and detailed reports on purchases and sales or expenses made. For the same reason they frequently made and kept archive copies of letters sent overland. The trader Imdilum, rebuked by one of his agents for sending him repeatedly 'incendiary letters' (*tuppū ša himiātīm*), is able to convincingly deny this reproach by writing him: "I keep copies of all the letters I am writing you"; none of

¹²² Unpubl. text in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, to be published by M. T. Larsen (MET 5 in his numbering), who kindly put its transliteration at my disposal.

¹²³ See the two publications on Imdilum's archives mentioned in note 33 and my review article of Ichisar's book, 'The Reconstruction and Edition of an Old Assyrian Archive' in *BiOr* (forthcoming).

them apparently meets his qualification¹²⁴. The contents of letters at times may lend them evidentiary force. The so-called 'letter-orders' of the Ur III period could serve as receipts to the officials issuing the items requested (see above note 78), and something similar may have happened later, especially with letters containing instructions from superiors and other orders and requests. Not infrequently such Old Babylonian letters conclude with the advice "keep/preserve this letter of mine as testimony/proof of me/my word/your word"¹²⁵.

For letters in particular the archival context is important, since their often detailed information loses much of its value in isolation. Unfortunately, the majority of letters was discovered during uncontrolled digging and has been scattered over many collections, as the Old Assyrian example shows. Sufficiently large correspondences, once reassembled, still offer many possibilities of analysis, as that of Shamash-hazir (AbB 4) shows. But their separation from other records from the same archive is a serious setback as the questions of his function, title and station show (see also note 36). Such information should have been available in administrative records (with the inscribed seals of the officials concerned), which would also help to date persons and transactions and so supplement letters which are almost never dated.

Of course, letters contain a variety of indications of their date and provenance even apart from the factual information they contain. Features of palaeography, orthography and language offer valuable hints and important clues can be derived from their beginnings: the address and a formula in which the blessing of one or more gods is invoked upon the addressee. Style and 'fashion' of address and blessing formula show a considerable amount of variation, also related to time and place, and the names of the (local) gods invoked are a great help in determining their provenance¹²⁶. Unfortunately, many letters of the Old Babylonian period

¹²⁴ CCT 2,6:14 ff., see Ichisar, *op. cit.* (see note 33), 214, and my remarks in *Medelhavsmuseet Bulletin* 19 (1984), 7.

¹²⁵ I know ca. 25 occurrences in OB letters (including a few unpubl. ones). The Akkadian phrase reads *tuppi/ze'pi/kaniki* (AbB 2,85:24) (*anniam*) (*ana qip awātia*; only AbB 10,148:32) *ana šibūtia/šibūt awātia* (*awātika*; AbB 1,48:18; 6,189:33; *Sumer* 14,45 no. 21:6, with *tuppaka*) *kil* (*kili/killi/killam*)/*ušur* (AbB 6, 189:34; HE 108 edge; *Sumer* 14,57 no. 31:17!)/*tanaššaram* (AbB 10, 148:35)/*šuššur* (*Sumer* 14,45 no. 21:15!). Some of the shorter letters to which this applies, occasionally called *ze'pum*, compare well to the so-called "letter orders" (AbB 9, 164; 172). Some are in fact provided with a seal impression (BM 97677; courtesy W. H. van Soldt), not surprising since a few times such letters to be preserved are referred to as *kanikum*, "sealed document" (BM 97538:12, courtesy van Soldt; *Sumer* 14, 57 np. 31:16). See for *ze'pum* in this connection F. R. Kraus, *BiOr* 24 (1967), 13 f. Not all letters ending with the advice to preserve them are "letter orders" or requests. AbB 10,37 is to be preserved "als Aktenbeleg ... um als amtliche Darstellung des behandelten Falles und Beweis des Amtseifers der Lokalbehörde dienen zu können" (Kraus *ad loc.*, p. 49 note o).

¹²⁶ See for the beginnings of OB letters E. Salonen, *Die Gruss- und Höflichkeitsformeln in babylonisch-assyrischen Briefen* (*StOr* 38; Helsinki, 1967), 14 ff. (the gods invoked) and 22-51 (a survey of the formulas and their dated occurrences). Note also the observations by R. Frankena, *SLB* 4 (Leiden, 1978), 58 on the fact that *naditu's* use to invoke their own gods and goddesses in the greeting formula and not, as was

invoke the more or less national gods, Marduk and Shamash, while many official letters of administrative nature do without blessing formula and even replace the name of the superior addressed by a respectful "my lord/chief". This makes us guess for his identity and the same is true of letters addressed to "my father", "my brother", terms which may denote relatives as well as friends and colleagues. A systematic analysis of the use of the polite, at times submissive, frequently elaborate formulas of the later Old Babylonian period could perhaps provide some clues for the status or rank of the addressee¹²⁷, at least when we can study a rather complete archive which informs us about the identity of the persons involved. Old Assyrian writers usually follow a different convention, whereby the person with the higher status is mentioned first in the address of a letter, irrespective of whether he is its writer or addressee¹²⁸.

A comparative analysis of private archives yields valuable insights into ancient history, in particular the social and economic realities of the times. It brings to life the fortunes of families which, for the very reason of being archive holders, must have been among the more affluent and important components of society. Such archives also reflect, in various measure, the impact of the powers of the state and may provide valuable evidence for the reconstruction of régimes existing, administrative procedures followed, and decrees promulgated, including their effects on the life of the citizens¹²⁹. As such, they provide indispensable building stones for any ancient historian who wishes to go beyond the official, literary and purely political sources, is interested in social structures, and needs statistical data.

The analysis and historical evaluation of any archive of some size is a difficult and time-consuming job. In Assyriology it is, unfortunately, often compounded by the necessity of laboriously piecing together remnants of archives scattered by illicit

customary, those of the addressee. Salonen did not attempt to correlate the formula chosen with the status or rank of the addressee.

¹²⁷ Suggested by a cursory reading of the beginnings of the letters addressed to the *galamahhu* Ur-Utu in Tell ed-Dēr, in the unpublished dissertation by K. van Lerberghe. See for the letters addressed to the later Assyrian Kings S. Parpola, *op. cit.* (see note 55), 437 ff. ("each writer had his own, personal address conventions").

¹²⁸ Discovered by M. T. Larsen, *The Old Assyrian City-State and its Colonies* (Copenhagen, 1976), 125 f., and applied to the correspondence of Imdilum by him in *op. cit.* (note 33), 221 ff. H. Hirsch, 'Über den Briefbeginn in der Korrespondenz der altassyrischen Kaufleute', in R. G. Stiegner (ed.), *Al-Hudhud. Festschrift für Maria Höfner* (Graz, 1981), 79-93, argues for a "deutlich nuanciertes Anredesystem" and assumes that the order in the address also depended on whether the letter in question was an answer to one received, was a business letter or a more personal one, contained an order or a request, etc. The basic pattern discovered by Larsen, however, remains valid.

¹²⁹ See D. Charpin, *op. cit.* (note 119), 28-34, for the consequences of a royal edict (*mīšarum*) on the local level for a particular family. In general most references to such promulgations, apart from the surviving texts of some decrees and references in year-names and a few royal inscriptions, are to be found in texts from private archives. See F. R. Kraus, *Königliche Verfügungen in altbabylonischer Zeit* (SD 11; Leiden, 1984), ch. 2-6.

diggers and antique dealers¹³⁰, where even some knowledge of their itineraries may be helpful. Many obstacles have to be removed. Officially excavated archives have not always been carefully registered and frequently have been split up by partition. Excavation numbers are missing or have become useless by a subsequent (inconsistent) renumbering, at times also of the rooms where the tablets were found¹³¹. Essential data have been lost by accident, including the death of excavators whose reports were long overdue. Find circumstances, including matters of stratigraphy, bearing on subsequent floor levels and even storeys of buildings, have not always been well described or convincingly reconstructed. Ignorance about and inaccessibility of collections, due to official measures or private claims, have hampered archival research. Some text editions exhibit a startling lack of communication between archaeologist and philologist and indifference to findspots or archival background, due to a purely literary approach or a focus on the categories of textual analysis and legal history only¹³². Seal impressions, essential for archival reconstruction, have been neglected or published and studied separately as 'works of art'¹³³.

It is encouraging that the importance of the 'archival approach' is now generally acknowledged and that the 'sins of youth' mentioned become rarer. Some of those previously committed even can be repaired to some extent by a perusal of carefully recorded, often neglected archaeological data, as the case of the Middle-Assyrian archives from Assur shows. The possibilities of a comprehensive study of groups of texts as archaeological objects discovered in a particular context are demonstrated by several recent studies, such as that on a small family archive from OB

¹³⁰ See for the difficulties in reconstructing Old Babylonian archives some articles and reviews of recent text editions by D. Charpin (*BiOr* 36 [1979], 188 ff., on YOS 14; 38 [1981], 517 ff., on YOS 12; *AfO* 29/30 [1983/4], 103 ff., on AbB 8) and M. Stol (*BiOr* 28 [1971], 365 ff., on *YNER* 4; *JCS* 25 [1973], 224 ff., on YOS 13; *JAOs* 102 [1982], 161 ff., on YOS 12).

¹³¹ For Mari, cf. the remarks in ARMT 23, "Préface", i-iv; for OB Ur, the remarks in *The Old Babylonian Period* (UE 7; London, 1976), xviii; for Nuzi, the observations by W. Mayer, *op. cit.* (note 89), 12, second paragraph on the change in the numbering of the rooms of the palace.

¹³² See for data on the Ur III texts excavated at Ur in the course of seven seasons, at various spots, not mentioned in the text edition (UET 3), Th. Jacobsen, *AJA* 57 (1953), 125 ff., with note 1. The Middle Assyrian texts from Assur were published in cuneiform copies (KAJ, legal documents; KAV, letters and some other texts) and in transliteration and translation (David-Ebeling, *Assyrische Rechtsurkunden* [Stuttgart, 1929]), without any references to known excavation numbers and archival context (see Postgate elsewhere in this volume).

¹³³ For Old Assyrian this applies to some editions only, such as CCT 1-5, repaired by the publication of the seals in CCT 6. The publication by L. Matouš-M. Matoušová-Rajmová of *Kappadokische Keilschrifttafeln mit Siegeln* (Prag, 1984), springs from the conviction that they belong together, though one might question the decision to isolate tablets with seal impressions from those without them in the same archive. But we should not be blind to the practical problems of publishing large archives or the impossibility of assigning a sufficient number of texts to a particular archive to warrant a special volume. It is to be hoped that the expected publication of the archives excavated at Kanish and kept in Ankara, will not separate texts and seals.

Nippur¹³⁴. What careful archaeological recording of written material in its immediate and wider archaeological context, in combination with a study of handwriting, text types and traces of baskets and labels, can accomplish was recently demonstrated by a fascinating analysis of the linear B archives discovered in the Mycenaean Palace of Pylos¹³⁵. Such a reconstruction should be a challenge to Assyriologists who in general have more chances of discovering comparable archival complexes.

¹³⁴ E. T. Stone, 'Texts, Architecture and Ethnographic Analogy: Patterns of Residence in Old Babylonian Nippur', *Iraq* 43 (1981), 19-34, where the correlation between the texts and the houses where they were excavated even allowed conclusions on OB surface measures and on the question whether unroofed courtyards were included in the surface of the houses mentioned in contracts. See also McGuire Gibson, 'Current Research at Nippur. Ecological, Anthropological and Documentary Interplay', in: *L'Archéologie de l'Iraq* (Paris, 1980), 194 ff.

¹³⁵ See Palaima-Wright, *op. cit.* (note 49).

LE PROBLÈME DES ARCHIVES DANS L'ARCHITECTURE RELIGIEUSE PROTODYNASTIQUE*

Ö. TUNCA (Munich/Gand)

Introduction¹

Dans l'étude des archives du Proche Orient ancien, les données archéologiques trouvent quelquefois leur place à côté des analyses de texte². En particulier, ce sont elles qui permettent de reconstituer la disposition interne des pièces dans lesquelles les documents étaient conservés³ et que nous appelons aussi «archives» (par extension de sens).

L'examen de ces archives, dans le cadre des recherches sur l'architecture mésopotamienne, ne manque pas d'intérêt. L'enquête qui sera présentée ici a été réalisée dans cette optique. Toutefois, elle porte seulement sur les archives dans l'architecture religieuse protodynastique, qui posent un problème particulier.

Mais celui-ci n'a pas de solution satisfaisante pour le moment. Dès lors, je me bornerai à citer les éléments du dossier que j'ai essayé de constituer, à faire le point de la situation et à énumérer les hypothèses qu'on peut formuler dans l'état présent des publications.

Nous pouvons dénombrer dans la documentation actuelle plus de 70 unités architecturales, attribuées à la période protodynastique, qui semblent avoir eu une

* La présente communication a été préparée grâce à l'appui bienveillant et généreux de la Fondation Alexander von Humboldt que je tiens à remercier sincèrement. Je suis par ailleurs reconnaissant à MM. les Professeurs B. Hrouda et J.-R. Kupper qui ont bien voulu relire le manuscrit et suggérer quelques retouches.

¹ Abréviations supplémentaires: *OLA* 5: E. Lipiński (éd.), *State and Temple Economy in the Ancient Near East I (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 5; Louvain, 1979); Suppl. Akkadica* 2: Ö. Tunca, *L'architecture religieuse protodynastique en Mésopotamie (Akkadica, Supplementum 2; Louvain 1984)*.

² Cf. J. Papritz, Archive in Altmesopotamien, *Archivalische Zeitschrift* 55 (1959), 22-25 et *passim*; K. R. Veenhof, Spijkerschriftarchieven, *Phaenix* 28 (1982), 12, 14, 20 et *passim*. D'ailleurs, comme J. Papritz (*loc. cit.*) le fait remarquer, c'est plutôt le contexte archéologique des documents qui permet de reconstituer le contenu exact des archives.

³ L'exemple le plus récent et le plus représentatif est certainement celui de la pièce L. 2769 du palais d'Ebla, qui a été soigneusement fouillée et enregistrée: P. Matthiae, *Ebla. Un impero ritrovato* (Turin, 1977), 161-171. Les observations sur la position des tablettes que l'on a faites à Ebla ont même pu être exploitées dans une étude portant sur le sens de l'écriture cunéiforme: S. A. Picchioni, *OrNS* 49 (1980), 241-245. [Voir maintenant les contributions de P. Matthiae et d'A. Archi dans ce volume-Ed.].